

**BEST
FOR
THE
ARTS**

**JOHN LYTTLE
SINKS THE
TITANIC**
Oscar winner
'lousy, old, lonesome'
over the years

**SCORSESE'S
BATTLE FOR
TURTLE**
A film-maker's
crusade for the
planet

**FOREVER
BELLE DE
JOUR**
A rare interview
with Catherine
Deneuve

**ARVIS COCKER:
HARDCORE KING
OF BRITPOP**
and why Pulp's
new album is well
worth the wait

**ALL IN
THE EYE**

THE INDEPENDENT

Friday 27 March 1998 45p (R50p) No 3,569

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

'Racist' prison chief is urged to step down

By Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

THE head of the Prison Service was yesterday accused of racism by medical experts and penal campaigners following his claim that black people were more likely to die in custody while being restrained because they were physically different to whites.

A forensic expert said Richard Tilt should resign if he could not provide evidence. Two Home Office pathologists said there was no evidence of a genetic or physiological link between race and the likelihood of dying from suffocation while being forcibly held. Mr Tilt's comments followed the latest death of a black man, Alton Manning, in custody. An inquest jury ruled on Wednesday that he was unlawfully killed at a private jail in 1995 after he was placed in a neck lock during a struggle.

Seven custody officers from Brixton prison, West London, have been suspended while the Crown Prosecution Service considers whether to bring criminal charges.

On BBC's *Newsnight* on Wednesday Mr Tilt said: "African-Caribbean people are more likely to suffer positional as-



Tilt: 'extraordinary claim'

phyxia than whites." This was because there was a "physiological difference" between the races. "That's the evidence that seems to be emerging, not just in this country but in other countries as well," he added. Six of the seven people who have died in custody while being restrained from 1992 to 1995 were black, Mr Tilt admitted. Nat Cary, a pathologist at St George's Hospital, London, said: "It's an extraordinary claim that is tantamount to racism. If he [Mr Tilt] can't back it up with some evidence, I would have thought he would have to resign."

Richard Shepherd, lecturer in forensic medicine at St George's Hospital, London, said: "There is no proof of any genetic link," but added "there are some diseases which are ethnically linked. We need to do more research to see whether they are relevant."

A spokesman for the Police Complaints Authority, which investigates deaths in police custody, said they had researched the issue and had seen "no evidence to suggest one particular racial group is more likely to suffer from it".

Raju Bhatt, who has represented families in death-in-custody cases, including Mr Manning, said: "... Not once has anyone attempted to suggest that death from positional asphyxia is due to physiology. It is highly offensive and disgraceful that the head of the Prison Service should be claiming this now."

The Prison Service said Mr Tilt was "greatly concerned at any aspect of his comments may have caused". It added that there was "no evidence" that there could be a link between the greater frequency of a condition known as sickle-cell among African and Afro-Caribbean people and deaths from positional asphyxia. A spokesman said this finding was based on internal research completed in 1995.

Natural born killer gets some home training



Taking aim: Andrew Golden, then aged six, is seen on a home video being taught how to use a gun. Five years later he used that knowledge when he and his 13-year-old cousin, Mitchell Johnson, opened fire on schoolmates in Jonesboro Arkansas killing four pupils and a teacher. Reports, page 16

Self-help is the key in new vision of Welfare

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

TONY BLAIR's vision of welfare in 2020 was presented for the first time yesterday, with self-help as an inbuilt cornerstone for the middle classes who can afford to stand on their own two feet.

"We want a system that aids those who need it, and helps people to help themselves," the Prime Minister said in a foreword to Frank Field's consultative Green Paper, *A New Contract for Welfare*.

The whole tenor of the document was geared to damping down people's natural fear of change, and the controversy that could be stirred up by it. But in a Commons statement on a document designed to "break the traditional welfare mould", Mr Field, the minister for welfare reform, said: "Our commitment to the vulnerable is not negotiable. Our commit-

ment to reform is not negotiable."

In a statement that marked a climax in Mr Field's 30-year personal campaign against the kind of poverty that disfigures his own Birkenhead constituency, the minister told MPs: "The new contract is about duty."

A final chapter of the Green Paper, on "Welfare 2020", is full of duties, but short on detail. In one sentence, it says: "Mutuals and private providers - in 2020, these providers will deliver a substantial share of welfare provision, particularly pensions." That is the extent of the "impression".

It also says that individuals will have duties to be independent, if possible, and to save for retirement, if possible. In another chapter on "New Partnerships for Welfare", the Green Paper says: "Provision for a number of contingencies is currently insufficient, including long-term care and protection for homebuyers against the loss

of income." But there is little elaboration, beyond the need for a possible extension of compulsory second pensions to those who are currently not covered by them. On that, legislation was promised by Mr Field within three years.

Pressure groups gave a mixed response, with many saying that it was "a repackaging of proposals that [had] already been announced", raising more questions than it answered.

Sally Wither of the Child Poverty Action Group, the charity Frank Field himself used to head, said: "The Green Paper states that success will be measured by a reduction in the proportion of children living in workless households. But for this to be meaningful we need to know by how much."

Iain Duncan Smith, the Conservative spokesman, said: "The Green Paper adds nothing to the debate."

Poverty to dignity, page 8
Leading article, page 20

Leading British Jews snub Cook over Israel visit

By Kathy Marks

THE BOARD of Deputies of British Jews has snubbed the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, by postponing a dinner at which he was to be guest of honour because of their anger over his controversial visit to Israel.

The board - the voice of mainstream British Jewry - said yesterday that it had postponed its president's dinner, an annual fundraising event, because the original date in May would have clashed with the G-8 economic summit.

But the board's president, Eldred Tabachnik, said: "Considering the strength of feeling in the community, we did not think we should have him at our dinner."

Neville Nagler, the board's chief executive, also confirmed a report in the *Jewish Chronicle*

today that the Foreign Secretary's insistence on visiting Har Homa, the Jewish settlement, had contributed to the decision.

"Clearly, it was a consideration," he said. "It would have made his presence at the dinner very awkward. People in the community were troubled about the high profile attached to Mr Cook's visit to Har Homa, which, it was felt, had exacerbated relations with the Israeli authorities and weakened his ability to move the peace process forward."

The Foreign Secretary had been invited to speak at the dinner, which was planned to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. He had not indicated whether he would attend. Other guests were to include the Israeli and American ambassadors.

A delegation from the board met Derek Fatchett, the junior Foreign Office minister, on Wednesday and told him that the function had been postponed for "organisational reasons".

The Foreign Office said yesterday that Mr Fatchett had been told Mr Cook's invitation would be issued again once the dinner had been rescheduled, either for July or October.

But Mr Nagler said it was not clear whether he would be invited. "That is something we will need to think about very carefully, given the feelings within the Jewish community following the visit to Israel," he said. It was stressed yesterday that relations have not broken down completely. Mr Tabachnik and other Jewish elders are to meet Mr Cook next Thursday to discuss their concerns about Government policy in the Middle East.

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Let's talk: Nikki and dolphin. Photograph: South West News

Dolphins help boy speak for the first time

IN what sounds suspiciously like a potential script for a Hollywood film, an eight-year-old boy has spoken his first words after swimming with dolphins, writes Andrew Buncombe.

Starved of oxygen at birth, Nikki Brice had been left apparently unable to speak, though doctors said he had the physical ability. Having tried various speech therapists with no success, the boy's family raised £10,500 to take him to the Human Dolphin Therapy Cen-

tre in Miami, Florida. Within days of being at the centre, where youngsters swim with the mammals, he had uttered his first few stumbling words.

"We hadn't been there long when Nikki was told to get out of the water at the end of a dolphin swimming session and he stood very quietly at the side of the tank," said his mother, Tabitha.

"He was telling us that he wanted to get back in the water. We all just stood there in

shock because it was so unexpected, but once we got over it we quickly told him that he could go in again and he soon cheered up."

Nikki, from Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset, is now being coached how to properly use his vocal chords and is picking up new words. "I have hoped for years to hear Nikki speak and I really didn't mind what his first word was," said Mrs Brice.

Scientists are largely unde-

cided about why dolphins have a therapeutic effect on people suffering from depression or else with learning difficulties. Some believe the underwater sounds dolphins make may play a part.



TOMORROW
IN YOUR
5-SECTION
INDEPENDENT

■ Queer
treasure:
Runaway
success of Gay
and Lesbian
Film Festival
FEATURES

■ Tinkling
along the Ivory
Coast
TIME OFF

■ Cancún:
Mexico's last
resort
TIME OFF

■ Westwood
ho: Radio 1's
master of rap
THEEYE

■ Win
Oscars
and make
money
— invest
in films
YOUR MONEY

Labour tells Hague not to be vague on Emu entry

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

WILLIAM HAGUE was accused yesterday of being "vague" after admitting that he might be wrong in ruling out Britain's entry to a European single currency for 10 years.

The admission that he might be wrong is a rare step for any politician, but the Conservative Party leader's remarks on a phone-in programme will revive speculation — killed only last week — that he is preparing to soften his policy on the Euro. He said Tory opposition to the



Hague: 'I don't think it would be right to say... never'

single currency could for as little as six years, depending on the length of the next Parliament.

Mr Hague reaffirmed his policy of keeping Britain out of Euro during the lifetime of this and the next Parliament, highlighting what he saw as the huge economic and political risks the single currency posed for the UK.

However, he added: "But I might be wrong about that. I might be wrong over a long period, I might be demonstrated to be wrong. So I don't think it would be right to say we should never go into it."

He said his opposition to the single currency in this and the next Parliament now amounted to a nine-year period. But he clearly signalled that he wanted to abandon any linkage to a firm number of years.

"What I have always said is that we intend to oppose at the next general election. That would mean for the next Parliament. That might be six or seven or eight years from now. "But the important point is not exactly what number of years it is that we will be clear about that at the next general election."

Mr Hague stressed the need to be cautious and attacked the Government's stance, saying: "I think the Government are wrong to say that we know in principle we want to go into it."

Facing telephone questions from the public on BBC2's *Westminster* programme, he pointedly refused to say the UK should never sign up to Euro. He was challenged by Brian Carter from Hull to say why the Tories would not rule out the single currency in principle.

Mr Hague replied: "I don't think it's necessary to say that we are against it in principle. I am not always sure, in any case, what that would mean."

"I don't think it's ever right to say we will never, we can never imagine going into something like that."

The former Defence Secretary Michael Portillo softened his own image after losing his seat by admitting mistakes over social policy and the family by the Conservative Government at a fringe meeting at last year's Tory party conference. But the hero of the Tory right, Mr Portillo has shown no doubts his own stance on the single currency, to which he is opposed in principle.

Labour seized on Mr Hague's diffidence, and accused the Tory leader of changing his position "more frequently than Eurostar leaves Waterloo". Doug Henderson, the Minister for Europe, said: "It is about time Mr Hague told the British people exactly where the Tories stand on this important issue instead of changing his mind every five minutes in a desperate bid to cover up the deep divisions within his own party."

Tree fellers move in on Kingston poplars



Tree surgeons go to work on one of the 56 poplars in Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey at the centre of an eco-protest

Photograph: Gretel Ensignia

TWO environmental protesters spent last night underground in specially dug tunnels as the campaign against the felling of 56 trees continued.

Police said yesterday evening that the operation to remove the remaining

eco-warriors from the tunnels at Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, had been halted for the night.

"There are still two protesters underground but the attempt to remove them has now stopped until tomorrow morning," said a spokeswoman for the Metropolitan Police. The protest has been sparked by the local council's decision to fell 56 poplar trees that line the bank of the River Thames, blocking the view of a new luxury home development. The responsibility for removing the protesters, originally 60 in number, falls to the under-sheriff of Greater London John Hargrove, with 140 private security guards under his control. A police spokeswoman said around 120 officers were also on duty.

Jury studies artist's sculptures modelled on human remains

A COURTROOM doubled as an art gallery yesterday so a jury could look at an array of "grisly" body-part sculptures.

The 10 women and two men trying former butcher turned artist, Anthony-Noel Kelly, 42, and undertaker Niel Lindsay, 25, for stealing the originals they were modelled on from the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS), spent several minutes studying them.

They included two studies of an old man's head and torso and cross-sections of a thigh and assorted limbs. In between rested another example of Mr

Kelly's work — a large chunk of a woman's body dissected to reveal part of her womb.

Both Mr Kelly, of Clapham, south London, and Mr Lindsay, from Stoke Newington, north London, deny one charge of stealing "human anatomical specimens" from the RCS between June 1991 and November 1994. Mr Kelly alone also pleads not guilty to dishonestly handling.

The jury at Southwark Crown Court, south London earlier heard that Mr Kelly paid Mr Lindsay, a former RCS trainee lab technician, £400 to help

smuggle out "a large number" of parts of dead bodies after wrapping them in bin liners and putting them into a rucksack. Sometimes the sculptor took them home on his motorbike, while on other occasions Mr Lindsay would ferry them to Mr Kelly's flat by taxi.

After preparing casts of the items, he made "exact copy" sculptures which were displayed at an exhibition in London last year.

Police began an investigation and some of the body parts were exhumed by officers from a makeshift grave in a field next

to Mr Kelly's family home in Smarden, Kent.

Other items were recovered from the basement of a flat belonging to an unsuspecting girlfriend in Brixton, south London.

The haul of some 50 body parts was taken to Greenwich mortuary, catalogued and then examined by a pathologist.

His report, which was read to the jury yesterday, listed the head and torso, another head, numerous limbs, feet, toes and just about every other part of the human body, including a portion of a brain, a right but-

tock, what was thought to be male genitalia, and some "unrecognisable" items.

The court has heard that in interviews with police, Mr Kelly and Mr Lindsay admitted taking the items after discovering that the RCS had held them for longer than the three years allowed under the special licences granted by Her Majesty's Inspector of Anatomy.

They contended this meant the institution had forfeited any right to them and therefore they could not be guilty of stealing them from the college. The case resumes on Monday.

CONTENTS

News	2-10
Foreign	12-16
Features	17-18
Obituaries	19
Leader	20
Lectures	20
Comment	21
Business	22-27
Shares	25
Unit Trusts	26
Sport	28-32
Crosswords	32 & The Eye 30
TV & radio	The Eye, 31, 32

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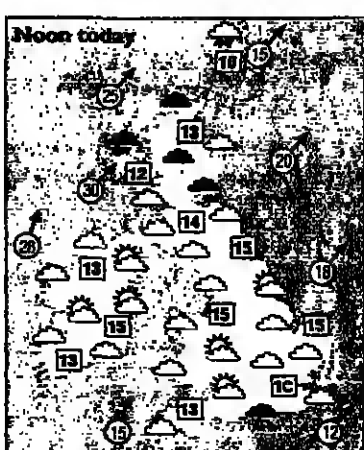
Q: What was the name of the comet seen last year visible with the naked eye?

Call 0930 563402

Holiday is based on two people sharing and must be taken by 31/12/98. Subject to availability. Prizes are awarded from a pool of prizes.

Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Winner picked at random after close 30 March 1998. Local Independent Newspapers rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

WEATHER



Northern Scotland will have a cloudy day with rain spreading from the south. However, rain over southern Scotland, northern England and Northern Ireland will die away, leaving a bright afternoon with sunshine breaking through. Wales and the southern half of England will start overcast and drizzly but most places will become dry. It will stay grey and misty around southern and western coasts but inland it will brighten up with some haze but warm sunshine in the afternoon.

Outlook for the next few days
Very mild or even warm through the next few days but it is going to be unsettled. There'll be rain across the whole country, although the south-east will start off dry and bright. More rain will move across on Sunday, some of it heavy, especially over western Scotland. This will clear away to leave a brighter day on Monday with spells of sunshine, but the odd shower is still possible, with steady rain returning to the south later.

British Isles weather

Colours: Clouds; Fair; Fog; Rain; Heavy Rain; Thunder; Snow; Sleet; Storm; Sunshine; Sun; Wind

Aberdeen	C 14 57	Glasgow	R 8 46
Aberystwyth	C 11 52	Leicester	Sb 13 55
Angelsey	C 11 52	Ipswich	R 10 50
Ayr	C 11 52	Jersey	R 9 40
Belfast	C 11 52	Johns of Selby	R 11 52
Birmingham	C 10 50	London	R 11 52
Blackpool	C 10 50	Manchester	C 12 54
Bournemouth	C 10 50	Newcastle	C 12 54
Brighton	C 10 50	Nottingham	C 12 54
Bristol	C 10 50	Oxford	C 11 52
Cardiff	C 10 50	Plymouth	C 10 50
Cardle	C 12 54	Scarborough	C 12 54
Doncaster	C 12 54	Sheffield	C 10 50
Exeter	C 12 54	Southampton	C 10 50
Gloucester	C 12 54	Stirling	C 10 50
Harrogate	C 12 54	Stoke Newington	C 10 50
Hull	C 12 54	Swansea	C 10 50
Leeds	C 12 54	Torquay	C 12 54

Air quality

NO₂ Good

London Good

South East Good

West Good

North Good

Scotland Good

Wales Good

London Good

South East Good

West Good

North Good

Scotland Good

Wales Good

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North Good

Scotland Good

Wales Good

London Good

INDEPENDENT Weatherline

For the latest forecasts the INDEPENDENT Weatherline is available on the internet at <http://www.independent.co.uk/weather>

High tides AM HT PM HT

London 00:50 7.0 13:21 7.5

Liverpool 10:30 9.8 22:56 9.8

Aberystwyth 08:27 13.7 18:52 13.8

Hull (Humber) 08:36 8.6 17:43 8.9

Greenwich 10:41 4.3 23:13 4.4

Dun Laoghaire 10:41 4.3 23:13 4.4

Height measured in metres

Lighting-up times Sun & moon

Belfast 18:50 to 05:07 Sun rises: 05:48

Birmingham 18:52 to 05:02 Sun sets: 19:25

London 18:55 to 05:05 Moon rises: 05:41

Manchester 18:44 to 05:09 Moon sets: 17:41

New Moon March 28

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Belfast 18:50 to 05:07 Sun rises: 05:48

Birmingham 18:52 to 05:02 Sun sets: 1

Standing room only as rail overcrowding worsens

Top five most overcrowded London commuter lines

Train company	% of trains overcrowded	When
Thameslink Inner Loop	8.3	am rush hour
Connex South Central, Sussex Coast	8.2	am rush hour
Connex South Eastern Kent Coast	5.8	am rush hour
South West Trains Inner routes	5.2	am rush hour
Great Eastern Outer services	4.4	pm rush hour

By Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent

FIVE out of 10 train companies operating key commuter routes serving London are officially overcrowded, according to Government figures released yesterday.

They break peak-hour overcrowding limits – set when the services were privatised – and things could get even worse with passenger numbers close to record levels in south-east England.

The boom in railway use could see

taxpayers buying extra rolling stock for successful private companies. Under complex arrangements set up when the railways were sold off, if a rail firm is too successful it can apply for more public subsidy to meet "unexpected passenger numbers".

One company close to the "upper limit" is Connex South Eastern, which serves Kent commuters. It already receives £30m a year in public subsidy and currently carries more than 115,000 passengers in the morning rush-hour.

If this figure increases to more

than 120,000, the company could ask the taxpayer to fund new carriages – which each cost £750,000. At the expected rates of growth, it will breach the limits in a little over 12 months.

The most packed carriages could be found on the Connex South Central network – which runs trains from London to Surrey and Sussex. The service carried about 60,000 passengers in the morning rush-hour last year – roughly 3,500 more than it should, and 1,000 above the official threshold. Other lines where travellers are being squeezed into spaces too small to handle them include Thameslink – which runs from Bedford to Brighton; South West Trains – the biggest commuter train service – and Great Eastern, which ferries passengers between Liverpool Street and East Anglia.

London's booming economy has seen the number of people travelling by train into the capital leap 8.9 per cent from 724,500 last year to nearly 789,000 in the daily rush hours.

John O'Brien, the franchising director who monitors passenger num-

bers, said the current travelling population is likely now to be "very close" to the highest-ever levels recorded in 1989 when 813,000 people rode the railways in the rush hour.

Officials at franchising Offices' rules state that the number of passengers in excess of capacity must not exceed 4.5 per cent of the total number of passengers in either the morning or evening peaks – and no more than 3 per cent over the two peaks combined.

Companies have been forced to act. Great Eastern is providing an extra 1,500 seats in the morning rush

hour and an extra 2,100 in the evening. Chiltern will have 12 new trains in service by May and eight more by September. Connex is also providing an extra 2,314 seats. Thameslink is increasing capacity by 4 per cent in peak hours, and South West Trains is providing an extra 2,000 seats.

Gavin Strang, the transport minister, warned it was "not good enough that five out of 10 train companies are operating in excess of peak-hour overcrowding limits."

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Gavin Strang, the transport minister, warned it was "not good enough that five out of 10 train companies are operating in excess of peak-hour overcrowding limits."

World tunes in to street party of the year

Thousands are heading for tomorrow's march to back the decriminalisation of cannabis. **Graham Ball reports**

IT IS GOING to be the best street party London has enjoyed for years. Thousands of supporters of *The Independent on Sunday's* campaign to decriminalise cannabis are heading for tomorrow's march through the capital in carnival mood.

And despite the underlying seriousness of the issue, campaigners plan to turn the march, from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square, into more of a celebration than a demonstration.

Sarah Russell, a mature student from Leeds, is one of hundreds who rang our special march information line: "We have organised our own coach and are hoping like mad that the weather is going to hold up because we are determined to have a great time. It will be just like one big party to be with so many like-minded campaigners – saying it loud and proud."

Yesterday columnist Charles Glass, writing in the *Evening Standard*, urged Londoners to support the march. "I call on everyone who came out for the countryside to return to the

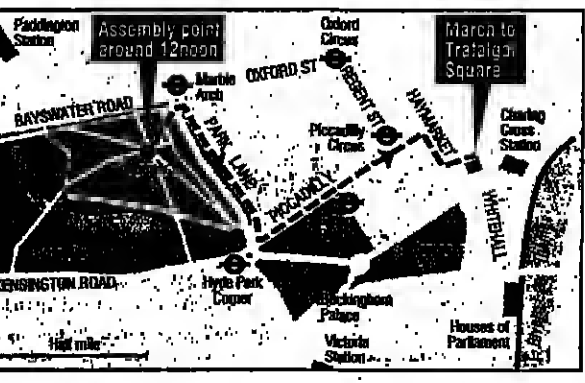
streets in the same cause: freedom. From Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square, thousands of men, women and children will parade to show the Government that those who smoke marijuana should not be sent to prison for it. Smokers are not a criminal minority, they are just ordinary people," he wrote.

However, unlike the Countryside Rally supporters, some of the cannabis marchers might look more than a little heavy-eyed. "A large number of flyers have been distributed around the London club scene and quite a number of enthusiasts have said they will go straight to Hyde Park from their all-night parties," said a volunteer worker for Release, the drugs charity.

Labour MP Paul Flynn who is trying to get cross-party support for drug-law reform believes the march is already a success. "Notwithstanding an earthquake or flood this march has already achieved a great deal," said Mr Flynn who will speak at the Trafalgar Square

Rally. "The extraordinary level of media interest that has already been created by this march means that every household in Britain will have the opportunity of discussing the subject of cannabis and the law this weekend. As things stand, the three major parties are conspiring to stifle debate on this subject. There is one simple message to get across and that is decriminalisation works, prohibition does not work."

Supporters are not just rallying in Britain. This week news of the *Independent on Sunday* march went international, creating a buzz of home and overseas media activity. Canadian television is in London to cover the march and an Italian radio station is going to transmit coverage of the whole of tomorrow's event live. There are even plans to broadcast the march on the Internet. Preliminary television interviews with some of the speakers have already been syndicated internationally, and Australian radio and the BBC World Service



Ready for the off: many of the marchers will be sporting the campaign's T-shirts – made of hemp, naturally

Photograph: Nichola Kurcz

FO alert on risks of travel to Madrid

A FOREIGN Office warning that British visitors to Madrid face increasing danger of robbery and violent attacks has led to a travel company offering refunds to customers, write Elizabeth Nash and Kim Sengupta.

In just two weeks, more than 100 clients have taken up the offer from Air Miles of refunds or holidays at alternative destinations.

The Foreign Office advice to travellers, issued two weeks ago, was based on information supplied by the British Embassy in Madrid. "Statistics indicated that things were getting out of hand. Thirty-two British people this month alone have reported robberies in Madrid, and we have issued 24 new passports since the beginning of March to replace ones stolen. It's a big increase," an embassy spokesman said yesterday.

Advice sent to travel agencies warned of "an increase in violent crime, especially in Madrid where a growing number of people have had valuables stolen. This is often accompanied by threats of and actual violence, sometimes involving weapons."

In a letter to travellers, Air Miles, based at Crawley, Sussex says: "If you wish to cancel or change your booking, we will of course be happy to help you find a replacement destination; or in the event of your wanting to cancel your pre-set booking prior to travel, we would – in this instance – refund your payments and/or Air Miles in full."

But the Spanish government, sensitive to any threat to its tourism industry, has sprung to the capital's defence. "Our official statistics do not bear out the British claims," a spokeswoman for the foreign ministry said.

CAMPAIGN WHO'S WHO

THE CAMPAIGN to decriminalise cannabis has won backing from some of Britain's liveliest minds.

Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop ethical cosmetics chain, spoke movingly at the seminar on decriminalisation organised by *The Independent on Sunday* last December.

Recently, she announced her chain of shops would introduce a range of beauty products based on hempseed extracts – drawing the wrath of former Tory Home Office Minister Anne Widdecombe.

Richard Branson, the entrepreneur businessman, has lent his name and backing to the campaign. Sir

Paul McCartney, while supportive, has preferred to play a low-profile role in the campaign.

The visual arts have been represented by film directors Mike Leigh and Peter Greenaway. Fay Weldon, A N Wilson and Nick Hornby are among a host of leading writers to back the campaign.

Prominent medical supporters include Dr Philip Robson, consultant psychiatrist at the Warneford Hospital, and Professor Steven Rose, director of the Brain and Behaviour Research Group at the Open University.

For march information ring 0181-964 2692.

Comedy danger man back on air

CHRIS MORRIS, Britain's most innovative and risqué broadcaster took to the airwaves again in the early hours this morning, but only his most avid fans – which unbelievably include the sober suits at the Independent Television Commission – and insomniacs will be able to hear him, writes Paul McCann.

Radio 1 starts a new series of his weird music and comedy show *Blue Jam* at 1am. Which proves that the station is yet to completely forgive Morris for using its airwaves in the past to get MPs to comment on the fictitious death of Michael Heseltine or to announce that Jimmy Saville was dead.

Blue Jam is a strange mixture of music, monologues and sketches – some of which are the funniest and most distasteful to be found on television or radio.

In one memorable sketch in the last series a gentle-voiced acupuncturist explained to her patient how "You may feel a little tingle when I put this one in." Which was then followed by the sound of ooisy hammering and the acupuncturist saying: "The nails I use are between nine and 14 inches long and half an inch thick. They must go through the body part and at least two inches into the table, otherwise the patient will slide off..."

Another sketch featured a doctor whose only therapeutic skill was to "kiss it better" who is visited by patients with increasingly ludicrous ailments.

It may be that the BBC sin-

IN THE NEWS CHRIS MORRIS

cerely believes that Morris's humour is only suitable for those whose mental state has been altered sufficiently by drink or drugs at 1am so that they get the joke – and the corporation has advertised the show widely – but it still seems a criminal waste of Britain's most cutting-edge comedy talent.

The BBC will only let him on air because the show is pre-recorded and edited.

Morris, 35, started in broadcasting on BBC local radio until he was sacked by BBC Bristol for eating an apple over a news broadcast. After a stint on GLR, which has hosted almost all the Nineties television comedy talent, he teamed up with writer Armando Iannucci, Steve Coogan and Patrick Marber to create the spoof Radio 4 news show *On The Hour* – the place where Alan Partridge was born and which transferred to TV as *The Day Today*.

He refuses to talk to journalists on the record, although is not adverse to leaking spoof stories about himself and lives a quiet life in Brighton with his actress partner Joanna Unwin and young son. His last brush with authority was when he inserted a very rude subliminal message about former Channel 4 chief executive Michael Grade in his series *Brass Eye*. That cost him a sizeable

chunk of the programme fee and may mean a long hiatus before he is back on Channel 4. It probably also explains the Radio 1 start time for *Blue Jam*.

The BBC, which turned down the chance to air *Brass Eye*, is probably also mindful of the time Morris fooled two MPs into condemning a fictitious drug called "cake". David Amess, Tory MP for Southend West was even induced to wear the T-shirt of a fictitious anti-drugs organisation known as F.U.K.D & B.O.M.B.D while holding a giant yellow pill that was purported to be "cake" while shouting to camera: "This is a made up drug."

Yet in upholding the MPs' complaints about the programme the television watchdog, the ITC, went out of its way to praise the show as "innovative and amusing". Despite such official sanction, for now Morris is mainly just hard to hear.



Chris Morris: pre-recorded and edited

PAYING THE WAY
Chris Morris first took to the air for BBC Radio 1, Cambridge, in a report entitled "Ten steps to paymen", which was reported in great detail and involved reaction interviews with supposed members of the public.

TALKING THE MICK
He doesn't just do pranks for the amusement of BBC Cambridgeshire he filed a spoof with the news just before a broadcast claiming that the news reader sounded like a parody of Michael Grade in the last episode of *Brass Eye* could only have

been seen by someone with industry-standard editing equipment.

SUCKERED
Celebrities taken in by Morris's phony *Brass Eye* interviews were: Noel Edmonds, Claire Rayner, Bernard Manning, Carla Lane, Lyndsey de Paul, David Amess, MP for Southend West, and Sir Graham Bright, MP for Luton South.

DEAD FUNNY
Celebrities falsely killed off by Chris Morris: Noel Edmonds (murdered by Clive Anderson), Jimmy Saville, Michael Heseltine.

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Les hooligans rosbits

A HIGHLY MOTIVATED group of football fanatics is planning to ignore the authorities' stern warning and head across the Channel to the World Cup. Despite Tony Blair's caution to MPs not to abuse their VIP status, the all-party Commons football team is planning to play a match at one of the French venues against a select XI of Gallic politicians. Pandora can suggest one reason why the Prime Minister should not object to this clear violation of his recent edict. What could be more tranquillising - indeed hilarious - for the highly emotional fans than the sight of a group of fat, middle-aged MPs waddling about the pitch?

Frankly thinking

WHEN Frank Field became social security minister he was touted as someone who would "think the unthinkable". Yesterday the nation was given a look at his bold thoughts in his Green Paper on welfare reform. Pandora's reaction was to go to his website at the department of social security and initiate a search for anything "unthinkable". The result, as expected, read "No documents found matching these words." Perhaps we would have better luck if we removed the prefix "un" from "thinkable" and attached it to "remarkable".

Old King Cole

WORD has leaked out of Harrods's executive sanctum about Mohamed Al Fayed's doll new toy. He has acquired a glamorous wig that duplicates Michael Cole's lofty hairstyle. When visitors arrive in his sumptuous office, Mohamed likes to don the wig and say "Who needs a spokesman? I'm my own spokesman now." Was Tiny Rowland ever this charming? Is a bagel square?



Just the boyo for Labour

CONGRATULATIONS to New Labour in Gwynedd, Wales on your latest recruit, Owain Williams, the farmer who served as an Independent Welsh nationalist councillor for the past 10 years, has just switched his allegiance to Labour. No doubt Caernarfon, which is 75 per cent Welsh-speaking, has not forgotten Williams's patriotic deeds in the early Sixties, including blowing up the dam of the reservoir which supplies most of Liverpool's water, for which he served a year in prison. Does he have national political aspirations? Might Pandora suggest Peter Mandelson should waste no time sending Owain one of those nice bleepers so he can stay firmly "on-message".

Whizzkid's counter offer

WHATEVER happened to Mike Ovitz, superagent founder of CAA, former president of Disney, and one of the most feared meo in California? He met his match for ruthlessness in Disney chairman Michael Eisner and had to settle for a golden parachute worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Ovitz, who once represented most of Hollywood's biggest stars, has gone into the shopping-mall business. According to *Variety*, he's just signed a deal with a firm called Glimcher Realty to open "The Mall at Polaris" in Columbus, Ohio. What's the budget? A whopping \$1.5m - slightly less than Mike used to spend on designer mineral water back in his CAA days.

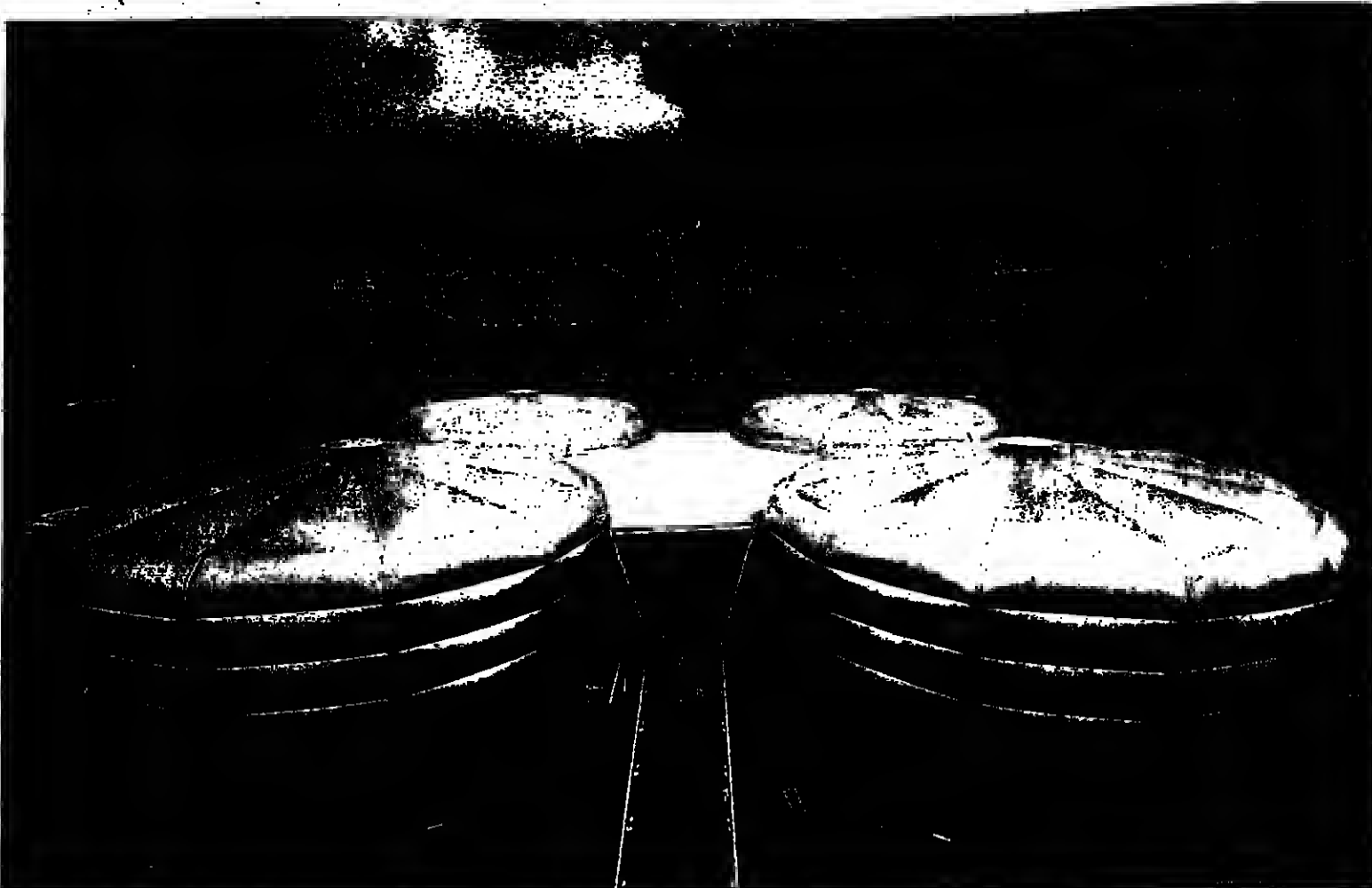
Deeper shade of puce

HEY, all you Deep Purple fans, check out this pile of type! Now you can buy a Ritchie Blackmore statuette "in a limited edition of 500 created by one of the UK's top sculptors". If you too learned to play the guitar while following Ritchie's unforgottably banal riff on "Smoke on the Water", you'll recognize that \$95 is a bargain. On the other hand, don't be disappointed if you don't receive a "cold-cast porcelain" Ritchie as sculpted by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi or daubed by Lucien Freud. Come to think of it, Deep Purple was not exactly the Beatles.

Pandora

Britain's export showcase is hot air

Nonie Niesewand previews an exhibition offering a snapshot of British inventions



Best of British: The inflatable drums in the shadow of Horse Guards Parade. Below, a Cityscape made from packaging Photographs: Peter Macdiarmid

FOUR silver inflatable drums filled with hot air and positioned at Horse Guards Parade, within sight of Buckingham Palace, are to become London's latest adventure playground.

Powerhouse: uk is the Department of Trade and Industry's showcase exhibition to generate interest in exports. British film, fashion, music, science and technology, packaging and products will be seen by heads of state from Asia and Europe when Tony Blair opens ASEM2 on 2 April.

Royal Parks officials would not allow the architects Branson Coates to dig foundations on the historic site, but this portable architecture is more than just a stage set. It is designed to be a travelling road show. "Like Britain, it's on the move," says Nigel Coates. Cables to generate all the on-screen entertainment and sound are run from a generator within Admiralty Arch.

Marketing jargon inspired four themes in each pod - Communications, Lifestyle, Networking and Learning. Digital information and video screens run alongside objects. Even they are on the move.

Scalextric whizzes buses and taxis with billboards around the Communications drum past a Cityscape made of packaging. St Paul's is made from Conran's Bluebird wine boxes, book jackets, tins and CD covers. Bjork's new album is on the wall and so are the fashion photographer Nick Knight's flower pictures. "I wanted to show that cities are an incredible resource," Nigel Coates said. "They make you come alive. Like my architecture which is much more than a purely aesthetic functional object."

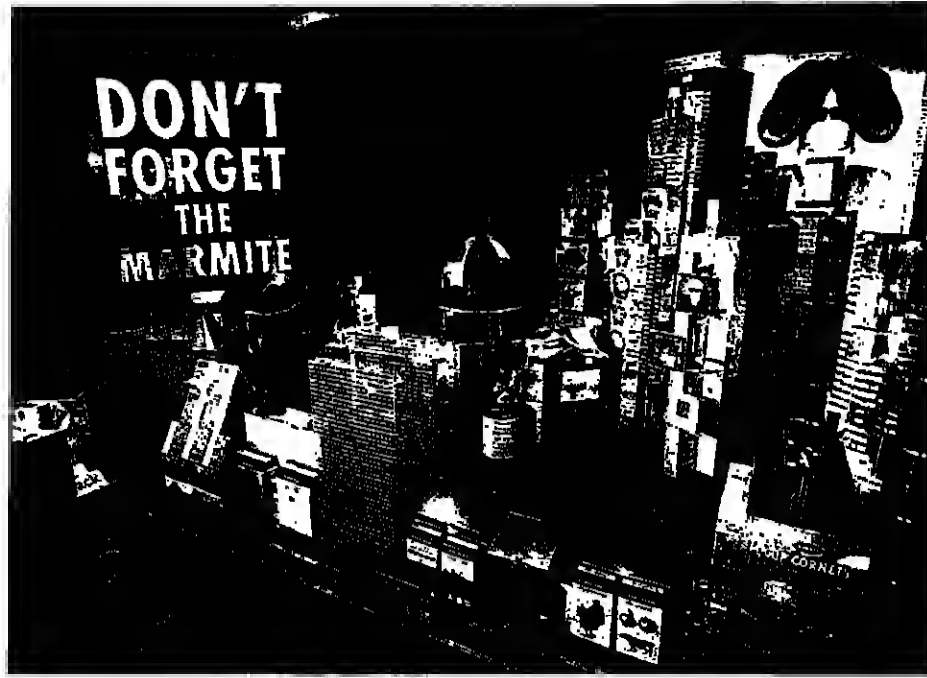
In Lifestyle, 31 suitcases move along a carousel designed like a slalom ski slope varying in height and direction. These suitcases open up to reveal Pison calculators, fold-up chairs

that turn into coffee tables by the furniture design company Jam, an aluminium stacking chair by Ron Arad, Professor of Furniture at the Royal College of Art, which was made in the same factory in Worcestershire as aircraft bodies, Alexander McQueen's bustier, or stilettos by Manolo Blahnik.

"Nothing precious. No objects in a design strait-jacket," Nigel Coates explains. Across to the Learning drum where five potting sheds are used to germinate ideas. John Innes potting soils show how cabbage feed a certain substance can fight cancer; a computerised artificial limb invented for landmine victims is displayed as is a thin television screen made of gas plasma, down one side of which there are cameras taking mug shots of all who visit beamed on to it.

The fifth shed in learning belongs to the Royal College of Art although Powerhouse: uk is RCA-led. Claire Catterall, the exhibition's curator, admits that more than 70 per cent of Britain's designers are RCA postgraduates. She won't accept the cool Britannia label. "Cool is so now. Exciting and energetic design has been going on in Britain for years," she says. "It comes partly from our heritage, bloody mindedness, the fact that we are an island. This exhibition is a snapshot for now."

Networking shows how creativity is sparked. St Luke's advertising agency - the first to be owned by its staff - has offices themed for clients, where nobody has a desk but moves into a room with their mobile and a satchel full of ideas. Powerhouse: uk opens to the public from 4 April to 19 April.



Child killer to be kept under watch

SIDNEY Cooke, the child killer, is almost certain to be placed under police surveillance as soon as he leaves jail early next month, writes Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent.

Scotland Yard also revealed that the public and other organisations, such as schools, may be alerted if Cooke returns to his old east London haunts. Cooke is due to be released from Wandsworth prison in south-west London on 6 April after serving nine years of a 16-year sentence for the manslaughter of Jason Swift, aged 14, who was abducted and raped.

Widespread concerns have been raised about what will

happen to Cooke once he leaves jail, following the experience of Robert Oliver, a member of the same gang jailed for killing Jason, who immediately visited a beach and library to watch children.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Bill Griffiths, of the Metropolitan Police, confirmed police surveillance was being considered. "There's a range of options, it could be about alerting the public, it could be about rehousing," he said. "Unless you lock them up to infinity, they are all going to come out. What we have got to do is manage the risk associated with the individual," he added.

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Standard Life Annual General Meeting

The 172nd Annual General Meeting of the Standard Life Assurance Company will be held in Standard Life House, 30 Lothian Road, Edinburgh on Tuesday 28 April 1998 at 2.30pm.

A member entitled to attend and vote is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote. A proxy need not be a member.

By order of the Board of Directors
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Secretary

STANDARD LIFE

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Policyholders may obtain a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts, including the agenda, by writing to the Customer Service Information Team at PO Box 141, 1 Tanfield, Edinburgh EH3 5RG or by telephoning 0845 60 60 070. Proxy forms may be similarly obtained by members entitled to vote.

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It's too late to halt millennium bug, say experts

By Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

FIXING the millennium computer bug is impossible, and action should now be directed at damage limitation, two of the country's leading bug-hunters warned yesterday.

Robin Guenier, head of the independent Taskforce 2000, said: "It is now fanciful to pretend that the problem will be solved. It is, put quite simply, too late." He called for a concerted campaign to minimise inevitable disruption.

His warning prompted Gwyneth Flower, new director of Action 2000, the government's official campaign group, to say: "We are too late to have a totally trouble-free transition to the new millennium."

"The millennium is a problem that will affect every man, woman and child in the world. We must prioritise our actions to make sure that the most vital computer systems are fixed, and leave the rest for later."

Those heavy warnings were underlined by William Hague, the Conservative Party leader, who told a breakfast meeting of Asian business people that the

Government had shown neither the leadership nor the sense of urgency required to deal with the 2000 problem. "It's time for the dithering to stop," he said. "Today, I urge the Prime Minister to take urgent action to put right his Government's record of neglect."

There is no media database record of Mr Hague ever having mentioned the issue before, and he has never asked the Prime Minister about it in Commons question time, although his spokesman said he had raised it in private meetings with business people.

With Tony Blair preparing to address a London conference on the threat - posed by the fact that many computers will be unable to cope with the two-digit date 00 from the end of next year - Mr Guenier offered his own plan for damage limitation.

He said that the key oeds were openness and accountability, with identified ministers and executives being held responsible for what was being done. In particular, he said ministers should publish lists of critical systems, stating levels of confidence of achieving millennium compliance, budget

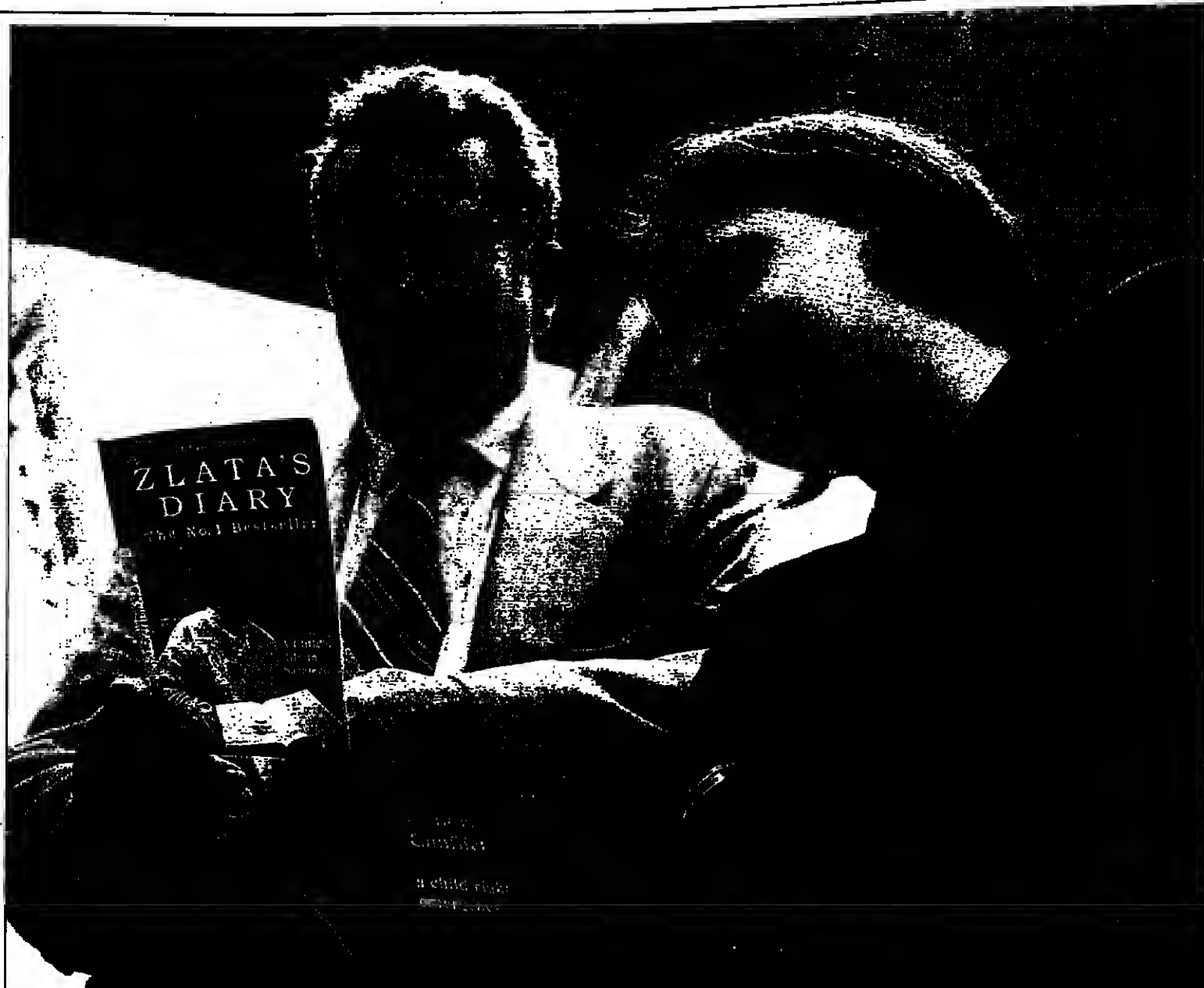
plans, contingency plans for breakdown - and the names of people in charge of tackling the problem.

"The chief executives of all major utilities should be requested by government to provide a public assurance that there will be no service interruption as a result of the date-change," Mr Guenier said.

He also urged the Stock Exchange to require all listed companies to provide full details of compliance budgets and plans. "Companies which don't comply should have at least the threat of de-listing," he said. "This is the Stock Exchange's duty in relation to investors."

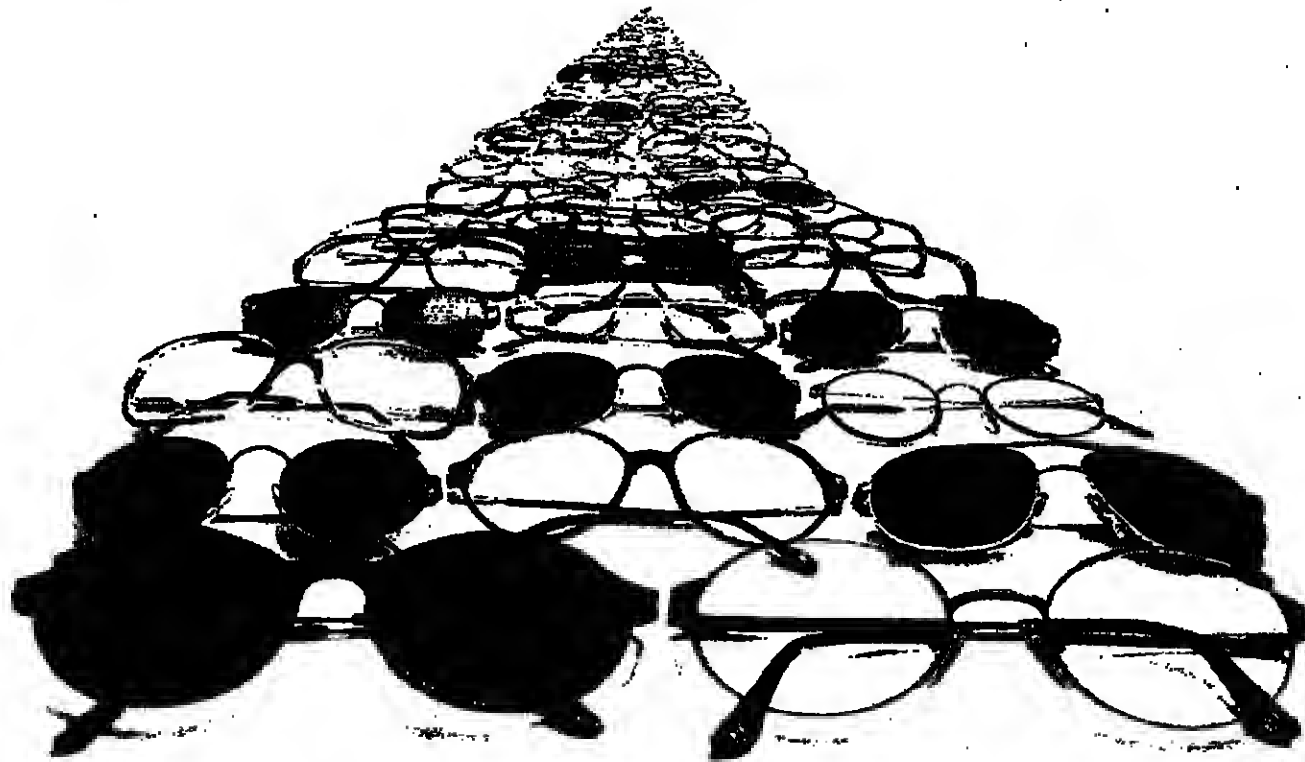
He urged all those actions to be delivered by June, but he also called on the Bank of England, the Prime Minister, the European Commission, and world leaders to act - and fast.

With a Cabinet committee already considering emergency contingency plans for breakdowns in critical power and transport infrastructure - which could threaten food, fuel and power supplies - Mr Guenier said that details of national contingency plans should be published by August.



Veterans reunited: MP Martin Bell, who was a war correspondent in the former Yugoslavia, and Zlata Filipovic - author of *Zlata's Diary*, the story of her childhood in war-torn Sarajevo - at the launch of a Unicef report called 'Children in Conflict' at London's Imperial War Museum. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

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OPTICIANS

The Strangler looms over backbench Bills

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

THE Westminster Strangler is poised to strike again today in the House of Commons, and there is nothing the authorities can do about it.

Former Tory education minister Eric Forth's speciality is killing backbench Bills. After objecting to some Bills last Friday, his constituents have been telephoning his office asking him not to do it again. But Mr Forth, 53, is unrepentant, and, like a Hollywood horror star, there is no way of stopping him.

All he has to do at 2.30pm is to stand up and shout "object", and he will effectively finish off a host of private members' Bills through lack of parliamentary time. The list today includes measures on animal health, traffic reduction, public record, and restrictions on the use of electro-convulsive therapy.

Also due for the Forth treatment is the Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill to ban foxhunting, now low in the queue and still needing to pass its report and third reading before it can go off to the Lords, after being held up by Tory opponents. It has no chance of getting past Mr Forth.

Some could have reached the Statute Book, given a fair wind in both Houses of Parliament, but if he shouts "object" they may all be slaughtered.



Eric Forth: An MP in the foxhunting, hanging mould

The MP for Bromley and Chislehurst, the comfortable suburbs of south London, says he is not killing Bills because he is fond of foxhunting.

Mr Forth, who has a penchant for bright ties, natty waistcoats, and who sings country and western songs in his spare time, wears his sideburns long and his heart on his sleeve. He is targeting the backbench Bills because he resents the way the

Commons is being asked to nod them through without enough time.

"I object to the large number of Bills that we seem to be expected to nod through. I still cling to this old-fashioned view that the House of Commons is a legislative body and it is expected to look at these measures closely."

"I don't expect them all to go through on the nod. These Bills are supposed to be looked at properly."

One of Mr Forth's friends said: "He is a very pure Conservative. He is very principled, a genuine free-market libertarian."

"He doesn't believe in big government. And he's got style. He's quite charismatic."

He was a communist at school in Glasgow, and after switching to the Tories at Glasgow university was an MEP in Birmingham from 1979 until 1984, when he won his first Commons seat for Mid-Worcestershire. A former buyer for Ford motor company, he has always been on the Tory right and is regarded as independent-minded, pro-hanging and anti-socialist.

Mr Forth told *The Independent* he did not feel guilty about what he is doing. "I have always believed we have too much legislation, and the private member's Bill procedure was about small issues that did not cost anything."

Tories turn into the listening party in membership drive

By Anthony Bevis

THE Tories are to open themselves up to more democratic procedures tomorrow when the results of a ballot of party members are announced at a Conservative Central Council meeting in Harrogate.

Celebrating his 37th birthday yesterday, William Hague unveiled plans for a new party business liaison unit which will help channel the views of business to the party leadership.

"The Conservative Party is listening. Listening to people, listening to business," Mr Hague said. "We are getting back in touch with the hopes, aspirations and values of the people of this country."

One of the more consumer-friendly aspects of the reform programme will be the setting up of a national telephone hotline, from tomorrow, which people will be able to use to join the party. Mr Hague has set a

target of doubling the Conservative Party's estimated 330,000 members by 2000, and new recruits will be able to use the hotline to join by credit card, with an annual maximum subscription of £15, with special deals for existing members.

Robin Hodgson, chairman of the Conservative National Union, the party's voluntary wing, said that the reform package "brings the volunteers to the centre of the party, where they haven't been in the past, and it will give them enormous influence if they wish to use it".

The National Union - which was founded in 1867 - along with the Central Council, and much else of the old Conservative Party, are to be ditched and replaced by a new, part-elected party board, and a national convention of constituency party chairmen.

Other Conservative innovations will include: an ethics committee to monitor stan-

dards; Conservative Future, a new youth wing; a women's network; a policy forum; and one-member, one-vote election of future party leaders from a short-list drawn up by members of the 1922 Committee of MPs. One senior party source told *The Independent* that the reforms marked a fundamental shift in the balance of power within the party.

He said that no potential leader would ever again be able to ignore the party grassroots - in the knowledge that their votes would be required to secure the top job.

"In future," the source said, "any MP with ambition is going to be very careful to look after the party constituency associations. With each succeeding year, and each succeeding leadership election to come, the position of the party volunteers and activists is going to be strengthened."

Stepfather takes stand to deny Zoe sex killing

MILES EVANS, a soldier, stood in the witness box yesterday and denied involvement in the murder of his nine-year-old stepdaughter, Zoe. He also denied having removed her from the family home at Warminster, Wiltshire, or having sexually abused her.

Private Evans made his denials in answer to questions from Alan Jenkins QC, for the defence, after he spent two hours in the witness box at Bristol Crown Court on the ninth day of his trial. He has denied murdering Zoe between 9-12 January last year.

In his evidence, Pte Evans, who is in the Royal Logistics Corps, also denied having left his dark blue T-shirt behind after the killing - a garment soaked with Zoe's blood which the Crown says is "crucial" in its case against him. Pte Evans, 24, also said he was not suggesting in any way that his wife Paula, 29, was involved in the murder.

The prosecution alleges Pte Evans took Zoe from the family's home in married quarters near Warminster Barracks on 11 January as his wife - a heavy sleeper - slept in their upstairs bedroom. It says he took Zoe outside to attack and murder her, then buried her in a badger set on nearby Battlesbury Hill.

Police found Zoe's naked

body six weeks later. She had died of suffocation caused by her crop-top garment being pushed into her mouth, and through labelling blood from her nose, which, the prosecution has alleged, had been broken by a blow from a fist. The prosecution has said Pte Evans left his T-shirt and a pair of Zoe's pants, both of which were stained with the child's blood, nearby. The shirt also had stains of Pte Evans's semen, which he said had come from a love-making session with his wife days before Zoe's disappearance.

Pte Evans's denials came after Mr Jenkins had taken him through the details of his movements in the days before Zoe's disappearance and the days afterwards and before her body was found on 26 February.

Mr Jenkins asked Pte Evans: "Did you kill Zoe?" Pte Evans: "No, I did not." Mr Jenkins: "Did you have any part in taking Zoe to Battlesbury Hill?" Pte Evans: "No, I did not." Mr Jenkins: "Did you have any part at all in assaulting Zoe?" Pte Evans: "No, I did not."

The soldier also said he had not interfered sexually with the girl or attempted to do so. He admitted he liked little girls but not in a sexual way. Asked about his T-shirt, Pte Evans said that sometimes his wife wore them and that Zoe might also

use one as a nightshirt. He believed he last saw the shirt when it was on his washing line weeks before Zoe vanished.

Pte Evans agreed that at the time Zoe disappeared he loved his wife, Paula, who gave evidence as a Crown witness last week. The jury has heard she now uses her maiden name of Hamilton.

Pte Evans agreed that for Paula to have killed Zoe she would have to have climbed over him in bed, to have broken the child's nose and buried her. Mr Pascoe asked: "I want to know whether directly or indirectly you are saying to this jury 'I think Paula killed Zoe'." Pte Evans: "No."

The trial continues.



Ahoy! Wrens on HMS Invincible look out for their families among hundreds of well-wishers on the quayside at Portsmouth yesterday as the aircraft carrier docked after seven months at sea. Due home at Christmas, she was delayed by the crisis in the Gulf
Photograph: Tom Pileton

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By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

THE Agriculture Minister, Jack Cunningham, yesterday demanded proof that an increase in burials of farm animals was threatening severe and dangerous water pollution and a potential health hazard. Only if convincing proof was forthcoming would he take action, he said.

He was speaking after the Today programme on Radio 4 reported that more carcasses were being buried in pits on farmland, breaking guidelines which specify at least a metre of soil below and above the body and a minimum distance of 250m from streams, rivers and boreholes. Knackers used to pick dead animals up for free, and sell them to renderers who would process the carcasses for the by-products.

But the BSE crisis has undermined the knacker industry, depressing prices. Many businesses have closed and those that survive are charging farmers around £50 to remove a dead animal.

The National Farmers Union and the Government's environment agencies in Scotland, England and Wales said they believed this is leading to an increase in the number of carcasses being buried on farms.

But while diseased carcasses risk spreading infections to other livestock and people if

they are not properly buried, the agencies and the farmers' union say they have no knowledge of pollution incidents caused by the practice. "It is something we are looking out for," said a spokeswoman for the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.

On Today, Dr Cunningham challenged the programme to produce harder evidence when he was presented with photographs of water-filled pits of bloated carcasses. "Photographs, you know, can be posed. If people would produce real evidence of a real problem we will take action."

He dismissed suggestions that cattle suspected of having BSE were being buried on farmland, which would be illegal. "If there is a suspect BSE case or a real BSE case, farmers get several hundred pounds of compensation for every animal." He criticised the BBC for raising concerns about livestock burial based only on claims made anonymously, about unidentified locations. "What is this supposed to do, except undermine public confidence in the livestock industry, which is terribly damaging to farmers."

Professor Carl Linklater, a former president of the British Veterinary Association, told the programme there was a risk of infections such as E.coli, salmonella and listeria spreading from animals to people.

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'A new contract that will lift people

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

A "NEW CONTRACT" between the Government and people bound by duty on both sides will be the key to welfare in 2020 to "lift people from poverty and dependence to dignity and independence", the minister for welfare reform said yesterday.

The poor, the old, the disabled and children are the main focus of the reform of the welfare state, with Frank Field saying that the principles of reform would be based on the twin pillars of work and security: "work for those who can, security for those who cannot".

The Green Paper promises, although does not specify, sweeping reform of the much criticised Child Support Agency, warns of mandatory second pensions and promises "Draconian" measures against housing benefit fraud.

The Department for Social Security warns there will be no "Big Bang" to create what Mr Field calls the Good Society but rather a gradual step by step over the next two decades.

"The Green Paper is the Third Way: out of the welfare state or defence of the status quo. It is a welfare state to meet modern needs, to support a decent and fair society founded on social justice," the report says.

It reiterates the Government's emphasis that the best

Welfare: the facts

The social security budget is £33.6bn in 1998-9 - not far short of one-third of entire government spending.

One in five people live on less than half the average income today, compared to one in ten in 1979.

Nearly four million children live in poverty.

Since 1979, the proportion of households with no one working has doubled to one in five.

One in five families headed by a lone parent.

The poorest 20 per cent receive a lower share of social security benefits than they did in 1979.

The number of people claiming incapacity benefit has tripled to 1.75 million claimants over the past 20 years.

The Government spends £30bn a year on the basic state retirement pension.

form of welfare is work as "the surest route out of poverty". One in five working age households has no one in work, a figure the Government is determined to tackle. This will be done, the Green Paper says, by targeting key groups such as young people, lone parents and the long-term unemployed.

Mr Field announced yesterday



Man with a mission: Frank Field described yesterday's statement as marking 'a milestone in a journey that has so far lasted 30 years'

that the New Deal would be extended so that there would be more help for lone parents and the partners of the unemployed to get back to work.

The disabled are particularly addressed in the Green Paper, after the recent controversy over disability benefits. Mr Field signalled that the Government remained committed to retaining

the universal benefits Disability Living Allowance and the Attendance Allowance.

He said there would be an end to the 16-hour limit on the amount of unpaid work disabled people on benefit could do and there would also be an extension from eight weeks to a year of the time in which disabled people can have a job yet come

back on to benefit at the old rate if their health fails.

There would also be legislation as soon as possible to establish a Disability Rights Commission to protect, enforce and promote the rights of disabled people. "Disabled people should get the support they need to lead a fulfilling life with dignity," said Mr Field. New laws

will set out more clearly who is entitled to disability benefits and will aim to make the system fairer and easier for claimants. At the same time the Government will crack down on incapacity benefit - the number of people claiming it has tripled over the past 20 years - to encourage people to return to work.

"The All Work Test for entry onto the benefit writes off all too many people," said Mr Field. "We want to move the current focus simply on what people cannot do to focus on what with the right help they can do. So we need reform... the effect of this will be to reduce significantly the numbers in future who come onto the benefit and thereby produce increasing savings over time."

Mr Field also raised the spectre of compulsory second pensions, saying there would be a Green Paper on pensions published later this year. While the commitment to the state pension remains, the Government will encourage private pension schemes to look at ways of helping pensioners take up the income support they are entitled to - one million pensioners do not take up income support, losing on average £16 a week.

Mr Field said that with an ageing population more will need to be saved for pensions but the share borne by taxpayers could not go up otherwise the costs would be unsustainable. More saving towards retirement would be encouraged.

People who have taken out insurance to pay off loans who then lose their job will no longer be penalised by losing benefit.

The Child Support Agency will also face "fundamental reform" - while costing £200m a year to run, it is only securing £100m in maintenance. "The CSA was intended to help children," Mr Field told the Commons. "But... it is clearly failing." A report and "branch" review of the CSA is being carried out.

The Green Paper also reiterated the Budget's commitment

ment to expansion of the childcare system with the network of childcare clubs to be expanded from next month, providing a further 20,000 places and a Green Paper on childcare to be published after Easter.

Fraud is also a priority for the Government's "Third Way" with Mr Field saying there would be "concerted action" to tackle benefit fraud. "Every pound in the pocket of a fraudster is a pound less in the pocket of someone in need," he said, adding that with housing benefit alone "almost a billion pounds is lost in frauds with suspected fraudsters having a 99 per cent chance of getting off scot-free."

One of the measures to be introduced would be thorough checks on National Insurance numbers to stop people using false numbers and new powers for the DSS to fine fraudsters.

The complexity of the welfare system will also be tackled - at this stage some people have to enter their details onto five different computer systems by the end of the year. "We have to make sure that the system is as simple as possible," Mr Field said.

The Government sets out thirty measures by which its performance can be judged, including a reduction in the proportion of working-age people living in workless households; it will reduce the number of children leaving school without qualifications, increase the number of disabled people able to work and extend second tier pension provision.

"The new contract is essentially about duty," said Mr Field. "Duties on the part of government are matched by duties for the individual."

"There are two no-go areas for this government," he added. "Our commitment to the vulnerable is not negotiable. Our commitment to reform is not negotiable. What is negotiable is how we can achieve our aims."

Leading article, page 20

Dogged crusader against poverty

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

THE sincerity of Frank Field's views on welfare reform is searingly obvious to anyone who has ever heard him describe the conditions of his Birkenhead constituency, where a culture of dependency is as endemic as its partner in crime: drugs culture.

It is not unusual to find obsessives in politics, but the minister for welfare reform yesterday reached a staging post on his crusade to offer radical solutions to his constituents' plight.

Mr Field has in the past spoken of boys in his constituency whose only ambition in life is to qualify for their own Giro cheques. Yesterday's paper leaves no doubt that those days are fast coming to a close.

The man and the crusade are indistinguishable, but the tenacity of Frank Field was superbly illustrated by his battles with the Mersey Militants, after they had infiltrated his constituency party in the 1980s and tried to dump him. He remains the Birkenhead MP to this day.

Born in 1942, Mr Field is a grammar school boy from a working-class background. His father was a labourer, and a Tory, which could explain why Frank became a Young Conservative before he went to Hull University. He was elected a Labour councillor in Hounslow, west London, in 1964, when he taught at Southwark College for Further Education. With all the honesty of a low-church Catholic, he said yesterday: "For me, today's statement marks a milestone in a journey that has so far lasted thirty years."

"This Green Paper draws on my experience at the Low Pay Unit, the Child Poverty Action Group, on the Social Security Select Committee."

"But above all it draws on what I have learned from listening to my constituents in Birkenhead, about the need for welfare reform. Those who rely on benefits for their everyday existence are the real experts here."

That genuine humility grew from his experiences on Merseyside and while working for the poverty lobby between 1969-79, when he first entered Parliament at the time of Margaret Thatcher's accession to No 10.

It is a rare event in politics for a prime minister, Chancellor and a packed Commons to listen in rapt attention to a statement being made by a non-Cabinet minister.

But yesterday was a rare moment of social history. Mr Blair is determined that it will generate phenomenal change. And when Mr Field said he recognised the "particular honour", he meant it.

The presiding genius of 'People's William' still very much in mind

By Glenda Cooper

IT was an instant bestseller, with queues stretching a mile to buy a copy. The austere named *Social Insurance and Allied Services: Report by Sir William Beveridge*, declared war on the "five giant evils" of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness and its 1942 publication built the foundations of the welfare state.

Frank Field's Green Paper *New Ambitions for our Country - a New Welfare Contract* is unlikely to cause such a reaction. But the minister sent by Tony Blair to go to "think the unthinkable" must surely have the "People's William" and his achievement in his mind.

The Beveridge report called for cradle-to-grave social security, a free health service and policies for full employment. Beveridge modestly remarked to his assistant, Harold Wilson: "From now on, Beveridge is not the name of a man, it is the name of a way of life, not only for Britain, but for the whole civilised world."

Alders' government brought in the "New Jerusalem", the



Beveridge: Declared war on the 'five giant evils'

foundations of the welfare state - the NHS (celebrating its 50th birthday this year), free secondary education for all, and social security, with its family allowances and pensions for all. But the system was designed for nuclear families with male breadwinners, underpinned by full employment - a world far away from today.

The welfare state was never set in stone and every government tinkered with it, determined to tame it.

Despite the changes of the 1980s - council house sell-offs, long-term care, reforms of health system - the welfare state did not wither away; the social security budget is now due to take a £33.6bn slice of public spending in 1998-9 - not far short of a third of entire government spending. It rose by £43bn from 1979 to 1996.

Mr Field's Green Paper, billed "one of the most important publications of this Parliament", is the third stage of a process of welfare reform which began with the New Deal - the drive to take the young and long-term unemployed off benefit and into work, plus last week's Budget, with its clutch of initiatives aimed at tilting the balance away from the attractions of life on benefit and towards taking up work. The Government is determined to make sure that work pays.

No doubt Sir William would allow himself a small smile at the rhetoric used today; after all, it was he who wrote more than 50 years ago: "Freedom from want cannot be forced on a democracy or given to a democracy. It must be won by them."

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out of dependence and into dignity'

The view from the north

By Esther Leach

"WE have been nannied for a long time" said insurance salesman Gareth Murchie 28 - arguably a grandchild of the Welfare State. The Murchies, both young professionals working in the growing financial sector in Leeds, were typical.

"It would never occur to me to fall back on the welfare state if I know I'm able to work somehow," said Mr Murchie. "But there are people who are doomed from conception. They grow up believing at 16 they will sign on or go on to claim housing benefits. It gets my goat, they should be out there looking for work instead of expecting the state to take care of them. The first thing I did when Matthew, our son, was born was set up a savings plan. We always intend to provide for ourselves."

They were concerned that a reduction in benefits might lead to increased crime and begging. "If the money isn't there they will have to find another way and it may not necessarily be work... it could be crime," he said. "We don't want aggressive begging on the streets either" said his wife Helen, 28. "But people should never be that desperate."

She believes state help should not disappear completely. "I feel a sense of insecurity... the welfare state seems to have always been there if you were ever really desperate. I think we are a wealthy enough country to provide for people who just cannot work because they may be disabled but we cannot afford either to allow the system to be abused."

Winebar owner Tony Gedge, 28, welcomed the ideas behind the Green paper, but said a cultural change would take time. "It can't be done overnight. Attitudes will have to change and

it could take a generation or two. The government must start in the schools showing young people how to look out for themselves. They aren't taught the social skills, the money sense or the commonsense to get them through life. And if you are a child of a family where there is long-term unemployment and you know nothing different, it is going to be much harder.

"These people should be targeted with special help... But I'd like to know what the government intends to do with the money they will save from reduced benefits."

"An increase in crime has also got to be a consideration, because if people won't work they will get their money somewhere else and that may be an easy answer for some. If it is going to work at all it will have to be phased in over a long time."

Richard Watson, 31, who promotes nightclubs in Leeds, said there was nothing better than achieving something under your own steam. "I like the idea very much but a lot rides on how the government sets about it. The dole has been a safety net for so many, giving a breathing space to help you get back on your feet. You just can't suddenly take it away and expect people to cope. There are people who get used to it. I know and won't get out of bed for anything less but there is nothing better for your self-esteem and well-being than doing something for yourself, knowing your own work has won you something that you need or want. But the government has to have in place the kind of help people such as single parents need to get out there working such as child care opportunities for work before they do anything else."



Tony Gedge (left), a winebar owner, and Richard Watson, a nightclub promoter, in Leeds. Mr Gedge welcomed the ideas behind the Green paper, but said a cultural change would take time.

Photograph: Joan Russell/Guzelian



Oh no, Robert's in love again.



Mothers and children at the One O'clock Club

The view from the inner city

By Rosa Prince

AT THE Haggerston One O'clock Club in Hackney, east London, parents were unhappy at the demise of the cradle to grave welfare state.

The club is paid for by the council and most of the parents would be unable to attend if it were not free. Most are on benefits, many are lone parents.

Almost all the parents were opposed to any shift away from a comprehensive welfare state and did not think they could cope without it.

Tania Cole and Annesta Allen, both 26, are neighbours and godparents to each other's children. Ms Cole's daughter Tia is 21 months, Ms Allen's son Tyrell is nearly a year old. Both women are single parents and do not work. Ms Cole said: "We come into contact with the welfare state every day. I think most people in Hackney rely on it."

They live locally and both had their children at the nearby Queen Elizabeth Hospital. With such young children, Ms Cole and Ms Allen use the NHS a great deal and neither could imagine life without free health care. Ms Allen said: "Paying for a private doctor would be impossible, but you have to find a way when it's your kids. It would lead us into poverty, it's so wrong."

Both women voted for the first time at the last election - for Labour. Ms Allen said: "I had never voted before, but started to think about it, because I was having Tyrell, and I vot-

ed Labour because I wanted all the good things they promised."

Carl St George, 32, is a single parent to 10-month-old Amy. He lives in nearby Hoxton and travels to the One O'clock Club so his daughter can mix with other children. Carl used to work as a sound engineer but had to give up his job and go on to benefit when Amy was born. He said: "I couldn't survive without single parent benefit. I have to get it. If it wasn't there I don't know what I would do."

Although Mr St George believes the welfare state needs to evolve, he is opposed to the introduction of a system such as that in the United States. "America is the worst place in the world," he said. "The people that are refused state welfare turn to crime and the gap between rich and poor, and even middle class and poor, is huge."

Karen Dorking, 30, and her sister Toni, 27, were at the centre with Karen's children Hannah, 3, and Georgia who is a year old. Jessica, Toni's nine-month-old baby daughter sat on her knee. Both sisters stay at home with their children and claim income support. Karen Dorking said she would be angry at any change in the welfare state. She said: "How can they do this? How can they make you pay for health care when you don't have a job?"

Toni Dorking was worried about the future of the state pension. "I don't earn anything, so I'm not fortunate enough to be able to put money away for later. How could I do it?"

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Good news at last for basking sharks, bluebells and voles

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

BASKING sharks and bluebells were among 32 native British wildlife species granted extra legal protection by the Government yesterday as it widened the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act.

In three weeks it will also become an offence to sell or advertise for sale bluebells which have been taken from the wild - although cultivated plants are exempt.

Ministers have acted in response to a long running campaign against firms which dig up wild bulbs and sell them in nurseries. Bluebells are still common but declining and if the climate continues to warm they could be replaced by plants better suited to higher spring temperatures.

"We're delighted that the law has been changed in this way," said Jane Smart, director of the conservation charity Plantlife. The maximum fine for selling wild bluebells will be £1,000.

The basking shark, the world's second largest fish, gets full protection from being hunted, captured, sold or advertised, on pain of a fine



Safety net: the basking shark, the large copper butterfly and the water vole are now protected species



Photographs: Planet Earth

of up to £5,000. It appears off the west coast of Scotland and the Isle of Man each summer, where it filters plankton through its vast gills. Its UK numbers appear to be falling.

and while no British fishermen take this harmless giant those from Norway do. There is strong demand for its fin, used in Oriental soups.

Michael Meacher, the environ-

ment minister, announced that 11 animal species, 12 plants, one lichen and four fungi would now be given protection under the Act.

These include the water vole,

which is rapidly declining due to predation by mink introduced from North America, and the stag beetle, one of Britain's largest insects. Its larvae live in rotting wood and

it is named for its fearsome-looking jaws, which resemble a stag's antlers. A further four species already given some protection by the Act receive more - a small estuarine fish

called the allis shad, the marsh fritillary butterfly, the large copper butterfly, and the pearl mussel.

A ban on collecting and selling the pearl mussel came into effect yesterday, without any warning period. This was because the Government feared a last minute rush by collectors to beat any deadline. This mussel, found in freshwater streams, grows up to five inches long, lives up to 30 years, and has declined due to people searching for pearls.

But a moth called vipers bugloss was removed from the list of protected species because it is now almost certainly extinct in Britain.

Conservation groups welcomed the new protection but Simon Lyster, head of the Wildlife Trusts, said: "The Act itself is in urgent need of a facelift." Plantlife said it had loopholes, for instance, damage or destruction to a protected plant is only illegal if it is intentional.

The green groups say there is an urgent need to beef up legislation protecting entire habitats rather than individual species, and to place more duties on landowners in charge of precious wildlife sites to protect them.

Children to learn ABC of morality

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

COMPULSORY lessons in morality, community service and political skills to end apathy and cynicism among the young were proposed by a Government-appointed committee yesterday.

Schools should devote 5 per cent of the timetable to teaching pupils socially and morally responsible behaviour, how to help their community and how to be effective in public life, according to the advisory group on citizenship education chaired by Bernard Crick. David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, appointed Professor Crick because of concern about young people's alienation from politics and society.

Thirty-two per cent of 18-24-year-olds did not vote at the last election, compared with 24 per cent in 1992. Prof Crick argues: "We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country." For the first time, there should be a national approach to citizenship education and an

attempt to restore a sense of common citizenship. At present, most schools claim to teach citizenship but quantity and quality are patchy.

The report says: "There are worrying levels of apathy, ignorance and cynicism about public life. These ... could well diminish the hoped for benefits both of constitutional reform and of the changing nature of the welfare state."

Prof Crick acknowledges fears that citizenship lessons could be used to indoctrinate children: last week Patrick 'Robin', chairman of the Headmasters' Conference of public schools, warned of the dangers of a future government introducing Nazi-style indoctrination, particularly if citizenship became a substitute for Christianity.

Mr Blunkett welcomed the report. "The Government has always made it clear that any recommendations will respect the existing place of Religious Education in the curriculum."

Pupils will be expected to learn through activities such as voluntary work and discussions on social and political issues as well as through formal lessons on topics such as the working of parliament, the group says.

It emphasises that citizenship is not just about teaching obedience to the law. Pupils should be able to distinguish between the law and justice and have the political skills to change laws peacefully. Schools should be allowed to decide how they teach citizenship but the values, skills and knowledge which pupils have acquired should be assessed. Citizenship might occupy a regular weekly lesson, be taught in blocks or form part of existing lessons.

The curriculum

Socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom. Knowledge and skills needed for participation in a democracy. Citizens' duties, responsibilities and rights. Value of involvement in the community. Understanding of local and national democratic institutions, including parties, pressure groups and voluntary bodies. Awareness of global issues. How tax and spending work. Economic realities of adult life.

Thirteen per cent of 18-24-year-olds did not vote at the last election, compared with 24 per cent in 1992. Prof Crick argues: "We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country."

For the first time, there should be a national approach to citizenship education and an

DAILY POEM

Two Roller skaters in Oakley Square

By Neil Powell

Like evening gnats these adolescents find
An island of late sunlight
To turn and circle in, and to unwind
Their tangled day to night.

The dark pump one makes his agility
Appear a conjuring trick:
A purple sphere, it's marvellous that he
Can twist and spin and flick

His ankles over pavement-edge or grating,
Ends vindicate his means.
Beyond, his friend comes, shyly hesitating
In faded sawn-off jeans.

Bleached spiky hair, precisely ripened tan,
Wide-striding sneaky grace:
He wears his body almost like a man,
Choosing new movements, new pace.

This is our final selection from Neil Powell's Selected Poems (Carcant, £8.95). Neil Powell, who lives in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, has published critical works such as *Carpenters of Light* and *The Language of Jazz* as well as four collections for Carcanet since 1977.

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Busting out: A detail of a poster for The Body Shop that has been banned by MTR, the Hong Kong railway corporation; the image is intended to expose the myth of the perfect body. Photograph: AFP

French right falls apart after deal with the NF

By John Lichfield
in Paris

A FEW of the President's men are trying to put Hamptons Dumpty together again. Others are trying to tear him into even smaller pieces. The rest believe the only solution is to lay a new egg.

A week ago, five local barons of the French centre-right defied orders from Paris and accepted support from the far-right National Front to hold on to their fiefdoms in regional assemblies.

It seemed that the traditional Right had snapped in two: part would go into semi-permanent electoral alliance with Jean-Marie Le Pen's xenophobic party; the rest would re-group in the centre.

After seven days of plot changes, betrayals, unbetrays, back-stabbings and un-stabbings, the situation

is more intricate than that, but, potentially, just as disastrous for the centre-right.

One of the five rebel presidents, Jean-Pierre Soisson in Burgundy, has admitted the error of his ways and resigned. Another may do so today. Demonstrations against the others have been called tomorrow by left-wing groups all over France. The NF, which had played its cards with skill up to last weekend, made a blunder on Monday by trying to force centre-right rebels in Provence to elect Mr Le Pen as the regional president (on Mr Le Pen's insistence). Since then, the momentum of the ultra-right party has been broken. But the NF remains the potential beneficiary of the muddle.

To sum up. The two main political groupings on the centre-right, the populist Gaullists and the "liberal" UDF, appear to be about to go

their separate ways. The Gaullists, like the eponymous general in 1940, are threatening to stand alone. But the UDF, a 20-year alliance of four centrist and rightist factions, has virtually ceased to exist. The leader of its most moderate faction, François Bayrou of "Force Democrat", has declared himself the standard-bearer of a new party "of the centre and the centre-right".

One of the smaller UDF factions, led by former foreign minister Hervé de Charette, has hinted it may throw in its lot with the new party. The rest of the UDF is dead in the water. The four remaining rebels, all from the UDF, have until next week to resign or be ejected from the federation. But the leader of its most right-wing faction, self-proclaimed French Thatcherite Alain Madelin, went along with this punishment with great reluctance.

If Mr Bayrou succeeds in creating his new party, it is likely Mr Madelin will create a new party of the right, which would almost certainly be drawn into electoral alliance with the NF. Smashing the structures of the centre-right has long been the NF's ambition. Until last weekend, the softly-softly tactics of its number two, Bruno Mégret, offering support to the rebels without pre-conditions, worked like a charm.

Mr Le Pen's abrupt insistence on claiming a personal reward in the presidency of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur made the rebels look foolish. So did the results of polls in the départements - last Sunday, which showed a sharp reaction by centre-right voters against deals with the NF. The National Front can be pretty satisfied with its destructive week's work. But it could have done better (or rather worse).

Minister embarrassed after her attack on Blair

"THAT'S enough Tony Blair. That's enough Le Pen, too," Martine Aubry, the French employment minister and number two in the Jospin government, did not mean to put the British Prime Minister and the leader of the French xenophobic far-right in the same dismissive sentence. Not quite, writes John Lichfield.

Ms Aubry was speaking in a late-

night debate in the French parliament. A few hours earlier, Mr Blair, speaking in the French parliament, had delighted the Right and irritated the left with his defence of new Labour. When the same centre-right deputies who cheered Mr Blair heckled Ms Aubry's plans to put France on a 35-hour working week to help to create jobs, she lost her

temper. She pointed out that they - or their friends in the regions - had been making deals with the xenophobic National Front.

To explain her outburst about Mr Blair and Mr Le Pen, she added: "What were you applauding in Tony Blair? You were applauding phrases in which you recognised a few of your own fantasies, like the death of

ideologies... If the [French] right had an ideology, we might have a little less of the far-right in this country."

Ms Aubry is said to have been the most annoyed by the Blair speech. Among other things, he had said ideology was dead; all that counted in government was that policies should work. Ms Aubry told colleagues that she found his address "lamentable".

Paris vagrant held as 'killer of the East'

By John Lichfield

FRENCH POLICE yesterday arrested a 35-year-old vagrant thought to be the "killer of the East", a man who has raped and murdered seven women in the eastern part of Paris in the last seven years. Police said the man, named as Guy Georges, had been positively identified by DNA tests as the killer of at least three of the young women.

Relief at his arrest will be clouded by renewed criticism of judicial and police competence in dealing with the killings, which were not publicly declared to be serial murders until last year. It turns out that Georges had already served a prison sentence for rape and that police had a record of his DNA profile. He was a well-known vagrant and small-time criminal, who was arrested two months ago for stealing a scooter, and then released. Since 1995, police have held evidence of the DNA profile of the perpetrator of at least three of the crimes - two killings and an attempted killing. Checks against the DNA records of known sex-offenders in France were ordered only last November; the profile of the killer and Georges were finally matched at the beginning of this week.

There was almost another



Guy Georges: DNA tests link him to three murders

office. Georges was born in Angers, in western France. Police said he was of French west Indian origin, of no fixed address or occupation. A description and composite picture of the presumed killer, issued last November, said that he was a North African.

Police have been operating on the theory that one man was responsible for a series of murders in the Bastille and République areas of Paris for nearly three years. For months, they scoured the area at night in the company of a young woman, Elisabeth O, who was attacked by the man in her flat in June 1995 but managed to trick him into allowing her to escape.

For two years, the presence of a serial killer in the capital, preying on young women living alone, was formally denied. Detectives thought it would be easier to track the man without a public hue and cry. The killer seemed to disappear until two more young women were raped and murdered in September and November 1997. Police then confirmed that one man was thought to be responsible for a series of seven murders going back to 1991. Relatives of the newest victims furiously criticised the failure of the police to warn the public earlier.

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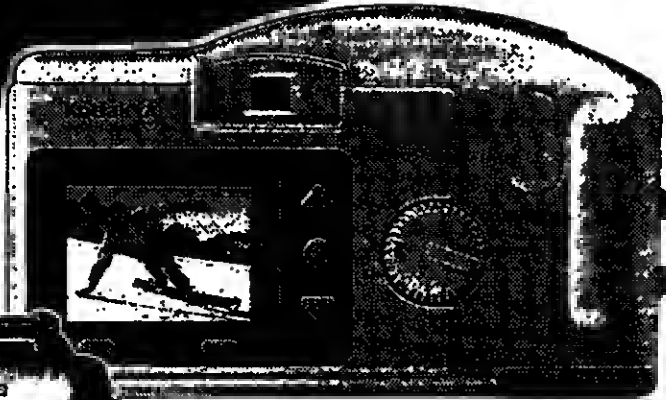
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Chelsea Football Club has launched its online MegaStore, built and hosted by IBM Global Services. Supporters worldwide can purchase official merchandise and gather up-to-the-minute information on match results and players. The site gets an average 350,000 hits a day- that's a staggering four per second.



Solutions for a small planet

Club Troika gives Russia more clout

By Rupert Cornwell

THE TANGIBLE results were meagre in the extreme: a promise to improve transport links and increased co-operation between universities; but for anyone with a sense of history, the mere holding of yesterday's first "troika" summit between France, Germany and Russia was enough in itself.

Singly, but above all in their alliances and their wars, the three countries whose leaders gathered at a government complex just outside Moscow have largely shaped the course of mainland Europe for the past 300 years. And the intended message yesterday was unmistakable: what goes around, comes around.

For Mr Yeltsin the occasion symbolised that Russia belonged to Europe whatever the attitudes of Nato and the EU. For France, which courted Soviet Russia even at the depths of the Cold War - and to a lesser extent for Germany - it was another way of saying that Europe should be an independent voice in world affairs: independent, that is, of the US.

And that is how the absence of Britain, eternally torn between Atlanticism and Europeanism, should be read. While Tony Blair may ex-

ert Britain's "leading role" in Europe, he is considered by both the French and the Russians too close to the US - an economic and ideological affinity most lately on view in the uncompromisingly tough 'Anglo-Saxon' line against Iraq.

Britain insists it has not been snubbed, claiming that relations with Russia are excellent (which, by and large, they are) and that bilateral summits and bodies like the G-8 are perfectly adequate means of ensuring they remain so. It has "oo

'Britain insists it has not been snubbed and relations with Russia are excellent'

plans," officials, say to turn this particular threesome into a four-some.

Mr Yeltsin, for his part, tried to lay some of this century's less pleasant ghosts. Unlike some earlier links involving the three countries, this one "was not intended against anyone else." If there was a chance of enlarging the group, that would be "no

problem." But the staying power of the troika must be questioned. The next summit is pencilled in for May 1999, in France.

By then, however, given Chancellor Kohl's precarious political health, and Mr Yeltsin's equally precarious physical health, both Germany and Russia may have new leaders.

Bonn from the outset was the most reluctant participant, while the Russian Foreign Ministry has had very mixed feelings about an initiative that Mr Yeltsin revealed out of the blue when he met Jacques Chirac in Strasbourg last year.

Mr Yeltsin seemed in reasonable shape yesterday, though he appeared to mistake the routine photo-call for a full-scale press conference, and deflected all questions about the replacement for the government he sacked this week. "Maybe yes, maybe no," he replied when asked if he would give the 35-year-old acting Prime Minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, the job on a permanent basis. Nor did the three leaders give any hint of their discussions over the crisis in Kosovo where, just as with Iraq, France and Russia have misgivings over the tougher sanctions against Slobodan Milosevic urged by Washington.



Close encounters: President Boris Yeltsin (right) greeting President Jacques Chirac at the start for the first 'troika' summit between France, Germany and Russia. For Mr Yeltsin, it was confirmation that Russia belonged to Europe. Photograph: AP

Ukraine's election hopefuls play on football fervour for votes

By Phil Reeves in Kiev

SKULDUGGERY and politics are eternally entwined, but the spectacle that will today be played out in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, is one of the more flamboyant fests told in the name of garnering votes.

One thousand guests will gather in the capital's Palace of Culture for a two-hour gala concert to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the country's pride and joy, the Dynamo Kiev football team. Top brass from the government will be there. So will the country's richest businessmen, its most celebrated performers, and - of course - stars of the field, past and present. Millions of Ukrainians are expected to tune in to watch the jam-

boree, which will be broadcast at prime time on one of the most popular national channels, Inter.

But, as the ex-Soviet republic looks fondly back at the long history of its favourite side, which was founded by a decree from Stalin, one detail is unlikely to receive much attention. It is not, technically speaking, the 70th anniversary at all. That occasion slipped by almost unnoticed in November. The festivities were postponed in a thinly disguised attempt to manipulate the outcome of the parliamentary elections, on Sunday.

These days Dynamo Kiev - which is considered one of the best teams in Europe - is about far more than football. The club president, Hrihory Surkis, a multi-millionaire businessman, is one of the top five on the

list of candidates from the centrist United Social Democratic Party. So is his deputy, Viktor Medvedchuk. So is Leonid Kravchuk, the chairman of Dynamo's supervisory board and the country's first post-Soviet president. To the irritation of some of the fans, most of the players and coaches, not previously known for their appetite for politics, have signed up for party membership.

The logic of the party - and the club's - ambitious leadership is sound enough. This century aloe, Ukraine's history has seen a catalogue of tragedies, be it the famine created by Stalin, Nazi invasion, or the devastation of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The euphoria of independence has faded, corroded by economic decline and stagnancy,

corruption, the tenacity and greed of the old Soviet-style nomenclature.

Yet the football team has given the nation something to cheer about, something which has been manifestly lacking under the leadership of President Leonid Kuchma. Its games routinely attract 100,000-strong crowds. Its coach, Valery Lobanovsky, has become the most popular man in the country, the subject of poems and songs. A scandal in 1995 when the club was banned from European competition for trying to bribe a Spanish referee with \$30,000 and two fur coats has faded from view. While politics is greeted with apathy and despair, Dynamo Kiev still inspires hope and enthusiasm.

The SDPU - and its candidate as the next president, Yevhen Marchuk

- is hoping to cash in on this sentiment. "We want to attract votes from people who have been disappointed by politics," said Oleksiy Mustafin, the party's spokesman, as he sat beneath a campaign poster printed in the Dynamo Kiev team colours.

The party's advertisers have brazenly pumped the football theme, churning out calendars with pictures of the players, and photographs showing the candidates in the Dynamo strip.

Last week, however, the SDPU - which is expected to be among the top five parties - received an unpleasant shock. In a match watched by most of the 50 million population, Dynamo Kiev were beaten 4-1 by Juventus in the quarterfinals of the European League of Champions.

Political pundits say the result has

shaved between 2 and 5 per cent off the SDPU's ratings.

Its rivals were contemptuous. "A party that stakes its future on football is not serious," said Vyacheslav Koval, spokesman for Rukh, the Ukrainian nationalist party. "The players couldn't play properly, as they felt the burden of responsibility. They were frightened of the ball."

The party, however, is undeterred. "It showed that life is like politics. There is not a victory every day, but there will be other victories in the future," said Mr Mustafin. What angers him more is the manner in which the SDPU's tactics are now being ripped off by several of the other 30 organisations vying for ballots.

The players from one of the better sides in the Ukrainian premier

league, Karpaty - from the western city of Lviv - have declared their support for the Agrarians. Much to the annoyance of Dynamo Kiev's management, the club's logo suddenly began appearing on propaganda put out by the pro-government People's Democratic Party.

Whether this football fervour will do anyone much good is questionable. As the election nears, the signs are that people care less about dribbling skills than dollars. Andrei Doloshko, a printer aged 24, was waiting on a corner to take his girlfriend to Dynamo's local fixture last night. He will not be voting on Sunday. "I am a fan of the club, and I like the managers. But why should I believe that lot knows about anything apart from football?"

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Clinton brings hope to Cape Town ghetto

By Mary Brad
in Cape Town

ONLY Hillary Clinton was expected at the Victoria Mxenge Housing Project in Philippi, one of Cape Town's saddest, sprawling shack settlements yesterday.

When Bill also stepped out of the shiny black limo, part of a fleet of US vehicles being flown all over the continent with the Clintons, the temperature of a few hundred ghetto

dwellers rose. "I can't tell you what this means to me," said an emotional Dennis Mofokeng, 31, standing a little apart from the crowd and swallowing hard. Mr Mofokeng is a member of the 280-strong housing cooperative named after an assassinated anti-apartheid activist.

To think the President would come to a place like this. He must know how we struggled." American marksmen were crouched on the community hall roof: security men in air-

rored shades manned the wire separating the Clintons from locals. The housing project, still a building site, seemed too fragile for the 20-vehicle cavalcade crawling around a narrow dirt track, carefully avoiding the ducks.

Soon Hillary and Bill, of the White House, Washington, were breathlessly admiring Veliswa Mbeki's new inside flush loo. But Mr Mofokeng seemed to find nothing incongruous in the surrealism of

scenes. "I am just so proud," he said. It is easy to be cynical about the US tour of the world's poorest continent. But yesterday the Clintons did manage to reach through the suffocating security and the wire to touch local people.

It would be hard not to be moved by the sight the Clintons had just whizzed by on the other side of the road. South Africa has no shortage of appalling housing, but Philippi, a vast squatter camp of cardboard and corrugated iron, is among the worst.

War crime suspect joins Serb regime

By Steve Crawshaw
in Belgrade

IN SERBIA, just when you think things are as bad as they can get, they always get a little bit worse. Thus it has been this week. The Albanian majority Serb province of Kosovo is rumbling steadily towards full scale war, while the rest of the world wrings its hands in despair. Meanwhile, in Belgrade, the government has taken on an even more nationalist tinge than at any time during the Balkan wars of the past seven years.

After months of wrangling about the formation of a new government, Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party (formerly the Communists) has joined hands with the far-right Radical Party, whose leader, Vojislav Seselj, was widely linked with war crimes in former Yugoslavia.

Mr Seselj - a historian whose paramilitary forces earned notoriety in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia - is to be the new deputy prime minister. One of Mr Seselj's leading aides, Alexander Vucic, is the new information minister, responsible for selling Serbia's policies to the rest of the world.

Mr Seselj's fierce ultra-nationalism makes even Mr Milosevic seem moderate. The union is a useful way for Mr Milosevic to bolster his own position. His title, federal president of Yugoslavia, is less important than his unchanging po-

sition of ultimate power. Hege opposition protests in winter 1996 briefly threatened that power. But Mr Milosevic hung on and successfully consolidated his position. Many Serbs who became disillusioned with the policies of Mr Milosevic (strong on national rhetoric, less strong on the economic reality) have per-

formed a simple back flip, from supporting Mr Milosevic on the nationalist left to Mr Seselj on the far right. After last year's demonstrations, the democratic opposition quickly fell apart in constant squabbling. Its best known leader, Vuk Draskovic, returned to the nationalist he had appeared to disavow. Mr Seselj, by

contrast, who likes to portray himself as the outsider, offered simple prescriptions which promised a newly strengthened Serbia and wealth for all. Mr Draskovic, who hoped to form part of the new government, has been one of the main losers this week. Mr Milosevic has in the past been sharply at odds with

Mr Seselj - and he will no doubt fall out with him again. For the moment, however, both sides seem content. The Serb prime minister, Mirko Marjanovic, has little power of his own, so that Mr Milosevic and Mr Seselj remain the two key players. Belgrade is pleased, meanwhile, that the West does not seem ready



Standard bearers: Serbs wave flags in the Kosovo capital Pristina yesterday during a pro-government rally

Photograph: David Rose

Imelda to give away millions

THE widow of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos said her family has \$800m (£500m) in secret bank accounts abroad that she would give to poor Filipinos if she wins the May presidential election. Imelda Marcos said it does not include \$540m he had in Swiss banks. It was the first time Mrs Marcos had publicly admitted her family had more wealth than what has been discovered by the government since Marcos was ousted in 1986.

Fire kills 22

UP to 22 girls were feared dead after a fire roared through a boarding-school hostel north of the Kenyan coastal town of Mombasa, police said.

Creaking case

VIRGINIA Davis, a widow of 88, was charged with beating to death John Wimbrow, 50, who lived with her. Her lawyer said: "She couldn't open a car door without help."

Court short

SUBHASHINGHE Premasiri, a Sri Lankan charged with theft, threw a bag of faeces at policemen who asked to step into the witness-box, but it hit a fan and showered the court.

Everest diary

WE hope to publish Stephen Goodwin's next Everest Diary tomorrow.

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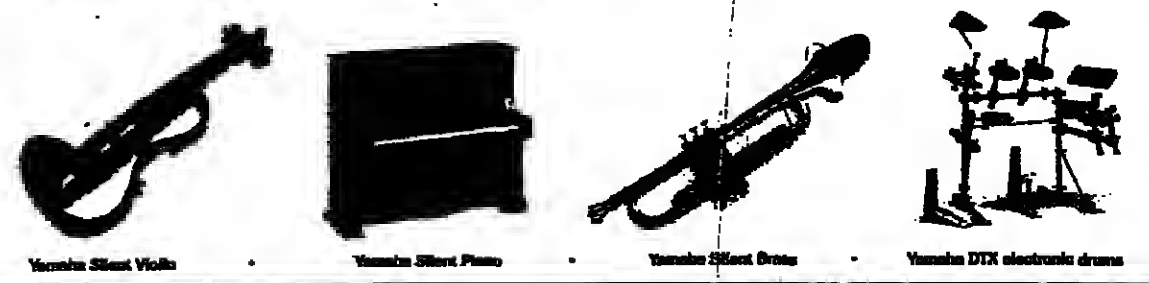
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Time for bed sleepyhead

The clocks go forward at 2am on Sunday and losing another hour of rest isn't just inconvenient; it could prove fatal. Annabel Ferriman explains why too many of us are already suffering from sleep deprivation

FOUR years ago this month, three children were left fatherless, because a lorry driver fell asleep at the wheel of his truck and crashed headlong into oncoming traffic. Two motorists were killed, one of whom was a 35-year-old father-of-three from Preston, Lancashire.

That accident should be remembered by every driver on Monday morning as they stagger out of bed when the alarm goes off, because Monday is a day when we are all at special risk. The dangers increase even more this weekend: tomorrow night the clocks go forward and research from the US shows that in the days following the change to summer time, road accidents increase by six per cent. The connection between these two sets of risk? Sleep – or more accurately, a lack of it.

According to sleep expert Stanley Coren, a neuro-psychologist from the University of British Columbia, Canada, who carried out the research, the reason is that most of us are already chronically sleep-deprived, because of our macho work culture and 24-hour society. Monday mornings are bad, when we have to rise early after two days of lie-ins. The loss of an extra hour because of the start of British summer time – with everyone getting up an hour earlier from Sunday onwards – is enough to tip the scales to disaster.

Our whole attitude to sleep is wrong, according to Coren. "Sleep is simply not dispensable, regardless of the attempts in today's society to treat it as if it were unproductive 'downtime'. The desire to get more sleep is not a sign of laziness, nor does it represent a lack of ambition. The need for sleep is real, he says.

Unfortunately, people think it is praiseworthy to manage on little sleep – one only has to think of the admiring tones in which people talked of Mrs Thatcher's ability to go 16 hours without sleep. The truth is that – and the way that society is now organised, we can work, shop and go clubbing for 24 hours a day. Once you could not do much research at 2am, because the library was shut, but today nothing is ever closed, be it the Internet, the banking system or the supermarket.

According to Coren's book *Sleep Thieves* (The Free Press, £9.99), we would all perform our roles better if we got more sleep. He claims that we should be sleeping about nine hours a night, instead of the seven-and-a-half hours average that we now



Pillow talk: Monday morning is one of the worst times for sleepiness, when we have to get up early to go to work after the luxury of a couple of days of lie-ins

have. Although we can catch up a little with a couple of extra hours on some nights, it is far healthier to have the same healthy amount every night than suffer sleep deprivation five days out of seven.

A medical experiment on US Army recruits showed that they performed their physical and intellectual tasks considerably better when they were given nine hours of sleep a night. The experiment was stopped, however, when senior officers discovered that their men were being "mollycoddled" and they were put back on the US standard issue of seven-and-a-half hours' sleep.

"There are parallels between sleep deprivation and drinking or smoking," says Coren. "Today, the person who runs on little sleep is seen as being mentally tough, ambitious and admirable. Perhaps, as society recognises the harm that building up a sleep debt does to the sleep-deprived person, and to those around him or her, this situation will change.

It may even come to pass that, some-

day, the person who drives or goes to work while sleepy will be viewed as being as reprehensible, dangerous or even criminally negligent as the person who drives or goes to work while drunk. If so, perhaps the rest of us can sleep a little bit more soundly," he says.

Sleep experts in Britain are so concerned about the dangers of sleepy drivers and the toll on society of sleep disorders that they are now planning to establish a national sleep foundation, a non-profit making charity, similar to the American one of the same name, to raise awareness of the problem.

Following a conference in Dublin last October, a committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Professor Neil Douglas, professor of respiratory and sleep medicine at Edinburgh University, to raise funds and organise the foundation's constitution and programme. In its first year, it plans to concentrate on the twin problems of sleep apnoea, the cessation of breathing for a few seconds or a minute or two, and narcolepsy,

in which people suddenly drop off to sleep several times a day.

"About 90 to 95 per cent of daytime sleepiness is the result of people suffering from treatable disorders. People often do not realise that there is effective treatment available," says Professor Douglas. He is particularly concerned about sleep apnoea, which he says affects about two per cent of the middle-aged population.

"Sufferers wake hundreds of times a night, because their airways become blocked. There is now an excellent treatment for it called Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP), in which patients wear a mask during the night and receive a gentle stream of air through the nose to keep the airways open. It has good results but some people do not know that they have the condition and others do not realise that it is treatable."

The committee is appealing for funds to drug companies, manufacturers of

breathing machinery and other multinational companies interested in sleep disorders. As well as carrying out research, it plans to work with a public relations company to educate GPs, politicians and the public about the disorders.

The importance of tackling the problem is illustrated by recent research quantifying the proportion of road deaths result from drowsiness at the wheel. Professor Jim Hom and Dr Louise Reyner, from the University of Loughborough, found that sleepiness accounted for 15 to 20 per cent of serious accidents on motorways. Typically, these accidents involve running off the road or into the back of another vehicle, and are worsened by the high-speed impact, due to lack of braking beforehand.

The problem worries not just sleep experts but accident organisations, too. Dominic Connell, spokesman for the AA, says: "We know that fatigue is a min-

mental factor in accidents. We would advise our members that it might take time to adjust [after the clocks change]."

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has launched a new code of practice for organisations with company cars. A recent RoSPA survey shows that a third of company car and van drivers said that their company did not worry about the long hours they spent behind the wheel "as long as the job got done". The organisation is also running a series of day-long courses around the country for fleet and transport managers and health and safety advisers on "managing risk on the road".

With added awareness, changing to summer time should become less dangerous in future. Perhaps Monday morning won't be so hazardous after all. Certainly the research provides an excellent justification for going to bed exactly when one feels like it, without any fear of being labelled a wimp.

Cross words can get you too down

Why is the 'Daily Telegraph' ditching setters and computerising its puzzles? asks Louise Levene, crossword editor of 'The Independent'

MAD? Or just stupid? What other explanation could there be for the editor of a popular and widely syndicated crossword puzzle to start monkeying about with it?

The world of crosswords has been buzzing for some months now with the news that the *Daily Telegraph's* Val Gilbert is proposing to save money and improve quality by computerising the crossword puzzles. She plans to abandon the traditional organic methods of production, whereby a loopy genius fills up a grid with words and phrases and then makes up clues for them.

Instead, the *Telegraph's* puzzles will be factory farmed. Ms Gilbert's infernal machine will fill in the grids and she will then supply clues from a database of second-hand *Daily Telegraph* clues. Any holes will be filled by former *Telegraph* setters on a piecework basis, at the meagre rate of £2 or £3 a clue – a hit like writing gags for Max Miller but infinitely less satisfying. Some setters, insulted that their creative endeavours should be reduced to the work of a jobbing clerk, have simply refused to co-operate.

The traditional crossword setter crafts his complete puzzle with infinite care, ensuring a healthy, balanced diet of anagrams, hidden words, homophones and so on. But apart from the sheer variety guaranteed by

the human element, this method means that the clues themselves can be interrelated.

Even an ordinary daily puzzle in the *Independent* can have a ruling motif. Recent ones have included a puzzle packed with references to trees and a special Welsh place names crossword for St David's Day. To imagine that such whimsy and ingenuity can be replaced with a database shows no appreciation for the setter's art. It's like asking 14 poets to write a sonnet. In the home-made puzzle not only are the clues all of a piece, they are also coloured by the personality of the setters, each of whom has a recognisable style.

Even at the *Times* and *Telegraph* (where setters have no by-lines), you know instantly if you're dealing with the musician or the cricketer or the Scot. Most broadsheet crossword setters are clueing full-time, but their former careers range from university lecturing to managing a blanket factory. Readers take enormous pleasure in spotting an old friend. To reduce that affectionate exchange to a soulless list is to treat both setters and solvers with contempt.

Computerised crossword setting is the kind of cost-cutting absurdity one might well expect from a budget-crazed newcomer to the job, but the strange part about all this is that Ms



A very British pastime: Colin Dexter, creator of crossword-loving Inspector Morse, settles down with a pint and a puzzle

Gilbert has been editing the *Telegraph* crossword for 21 years now. She, of all people, should know that the creations passing through her hands are more than a mere list of clues.

Crosswords have only been published in British newspapers since the

thirties. When the *Times* first began running them, readers of *The Thunderer* protested that such a parlour game should be included in their journal. But today, the crossword seems a quintessential part of a particular type of British life – as much

as a warm pint of beer, for instance. How right it seemed that Inspector Morse should spend his time solving puns and anagrams as he sipped his ale on a summer's evening. His creator, Colin Dexter, who has compiled crosswords himself, thought it entirely appropriate that the Oxford policeman should do them – although real-life prisoners are often some of the keenest solvers.

People really do buy their newspapers for the crossword on the back of it. The owner and editor of the *Telegraph* must know this. If they didn't know it before they soon will when the green ink begins to flow from clueless of Tunbridge Wells. Any solver hates to find alterations in their daily ration of favourite puzzles. The *Telegraph* crossword is a pleasant enough pastime, and it's perfect for people who don't like a puzzle they have to chew, but as any *Independent* addict will tell you, it is possible to complete the whole thing in your head without the need for a pen.

Ms Gilbert has been dogged in her defence of the computerised crossword (she plans to offer prizes to readers who can spot the difference), but the reaction to the news may well force her to abandon her experiment and accept the golden rule of crossword editing: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

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Peeking behind Asia's bamboo curtain



Visions of Vietnam: Abandoning his commercial work for the likes of BP and Volvo, Desmond Burdon roamed the back streets of Vietnamese towns. In doing so he captured a nation grasping for capitalist dreams. A small boy (above) roaming in a back street unashamedly plays up to his camera, while the 93-year-old grandmother (left), who was still working as a cook, possessed a vitality that stunned him. Below, Rob Judges caught this worker taking a break

Photographs: Desmond Burdon/Rob Judges



IT WAS in a back street restaurant in Hoi An, deep in the heart of Vietnam, that Desmond Burdon spotted her: a wizened old woman, years past the age when the West would have pensioned her off, stooping over the cooking pots, writes Michael Greenwood.

"I was 30km south of Danang, and she was a 93-year-old grandmother working in a little family restaurant. Having just cooked my lunch she got on the back of a little moped with her granddaughter and sped off. It made the Queen Mother look like nothing." The resulting picture is one

of several by Burdon which feature in an exhibition of images of Asia to coincide with the Asia summit. The 30 exhibitors, including Peter Arnold, Martin Westlake, Peter Hince and Jonathan Brade, celebrate Asian culture as well as architecture, streetlife and landscape. All of them have travelled extensively in the region - from Malaysia and Singapore to The Philippines and Thailand and India. Desmond Burdon's work captures the humour and contradictions of the Asian people with intense portraits. The vibrant colour of clothing and skin illustrate the humidity

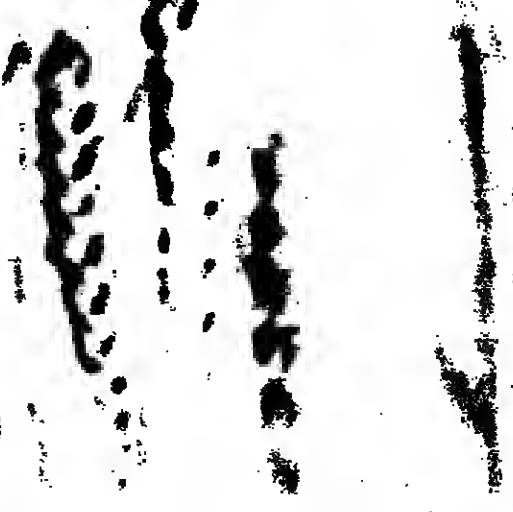
and texture of an eclectic land. Burdon, who works in advertising, says that a trip to Vietnam was a chance to get away from the commercialism of his work. "It stopped me in my tracks, it is so picturesque, but you soon realise that out there they would sell you their grandmother, they have been exposed to television and they want it."

"We were in a hotel in Hanoi when this tiny weezy man came in dressed in a tacky shell suit and wearing a diamond watch and enormous tortoiseshell glasses. It turned out he had gone from planting rice in fields to winning the contract to

put plastic toys inside chocolate eggs. He had made his fortune, that is what they want and it is happening. At the same time there is poverty, you see these massive hotels being put up between shacks where people are starving. Those problems are inevitable but it is their time - we have had ours."

ASIA opens at The Gallery of The Association of Photographers in Domingo Street, London, on 31 March and runs until 11 April. Admission is free. 0171 608 1445.

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JOHN LYTTLE

I SUSPECT the main reason many heterosexuals, liberal and teeny-tiny-minded alike, recoil at the idea (and ideal) of Coming Out - so hecoring, so blatant, so blah, blah, blah - is that it returns the straight folks' problems with homosexuality right back to them. Instead of the previously timid fag having to tip-toe around a certain subject, lie about what he did at the weekend and monitor every word from his mouth so each reference to a partner is non-gender specific (that is, if he doesn't own an imaginary girlfriend), it's the breeding classes who must now mind their P's and Q's and learn to adapt. Or not.

Coming Out is no guarantee of acceptance, though it's a fairly safe bet for increased peace of mind. Either way, straights are obliged to experience just the merest measure of the psychic pressure - 800 pounds to the square inch - that the closeted dai-

If you want us Out, you have to let us in

ly endure. Here, have some paranoid self-consciousness on us. This can cause resentment, but it's only fair. Well, Coming Out is a straight invention.

This is why. Homosexuality is only an issue because heterosexuality deems it so. If heterosexuality were to budge up, make a little room and stop creating such a big fuss about what boys do with boys then gays wouldn't have to either lurk in the shadows - boring - or make big announcements/statements/campaigns of their sexuality - boring and exhausting, though not, as boring and exhausting as permanent pretence. If heterosexuals bridle at Coming Out, they have no one but themselves to blame. And if they want Coming Out to go away, it's easily done. They share those lovely rights and privileges. I personally promise that the Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name will shut up the second the playing field is level.

All patently obvious. As obvious as heterosexuals making noises about their sexuality almost every time they speak, no worries the hubby, the wife and the kids crop up constantly and no one snorts about - such a prissy, faux objection - turning the private life into a public spectacle. Obvious, except it isn't. Coming Out

- being open, being honest - apparently requires continuous exposition.

How else to explain the following: "This House Believes That Staying In is The New Coming Out." This is the topic the Cambridge Union Society addresses on May 7, according to the fax that arrived on my desk yesterday. The fax is, of course, deliberately worded for (heated) debate, and worth quoting: "Faced with an ever-increasing acceptance of homosexuality, is it really necessary to 'Come Out'? What are the benefits of making such a public and seemingly irreversible declaration? Is it still necessary to define your self-identity by your sexual identity? Recent media coverage has focused upon those who have decided to 'Come Out' in public, and we are left wondering whether the membership of a 'gay community' is still a relevant and desirable prerequisite for life as a homosexual."

Every bald assertion and brazen assumption is a bloom one longs to finger over, but let's hurry along: "Is it still necessary to define your self-identity by your sexual identity?" What a tidy reversal! As noted, it's heterosexuals who mostly define homosexuality as sexual, only to experience disease and/or disgust

with the imposed. Fags know homosexuality is about more than what goes where, even as they leapfrog each available trick. Coming Out is at least partially meant to act as a corrective; if you know a known-fag you may observe that his life is as complete or incomplete - as dully human - as your own. The personal is political, etc.

That's certainly one "benefit of making such a public declaration", though we must now ask what public is and what a declaration amounts to. Is Coming Out to your family public? To your friends? Or does only the workplace count? Do you decide to be out in some areas of your life, in others (Mummy has a bad heart, Daddy is doddery)? Must you be Out to everyone or to a chosen few? Is a "declaration" wearing short, checked leather chaps to the office party or casually mentioning you're mad about a boy at the water cooler? Not Coming Out, but Leaking Out, which is what it really should be titled as that's how the process usually happens. What's often forgotten is that Coming Out is not just a choice, but multiple-choice. It is seldom the magical, total, overnight transformation the Cambridge Union overstates and some gay headbangers yet demand: here fear and fundamen-

talism make strange bed fellows, and an impossible challenge - Come Out and watch troubles melt away. Actually, Coming Out finishes one thing and kickstarts another: it's a step, not a conclusion. Is Coming Out easier these days? Depends on circumstance, no matter chatter about "ever-increasing acceptance." CO may be less of a big deal, but that doesn't render CO "unnecessary".

Whatever happens, homosexuality will never be the standard. Coming Out of some sort will always be required. Perhaps one day it will be considered as natural as, say, puberty; however, that time is far away. Until then it's up to Cambridge I guess, obliged to patently explain (again) that Coming Out on a Friday doesn't mean that the Saturday post will harbour an invitation to join the Community - whatever that is - and that Coming Out in reverse is cool. So sometimes closets have revolving doors.

Gays are generally better at that sort of contradicting/detour/phase/lark than heterosexuals, who still have to grasp the fact that gays can set the moral lesson (or practise moral blackmail) but that they, not we, are the only ones who can make This House Believe That Staying In Is The New Coming Out.

THE INDEPENDENT

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The missing notes of welfare reform

FRANK FIELD should be one of the Government's assets when it comes to welfare reform. He has long experience – he became involved with the subject when Tony Blair was still a teenager. He is universally thought of as dedicated, thoughtful and energetic. Only last month he implicitly compared his relationship with Tony Blair to that of Keith Joseph and Mrs Thatcher – philosopher prince (or mad monk?) and powerful monarch.

In the marathon race that is welfare reform, his green paper yesterday, "A New Contract for Welfare", gave him the opportunity, as David Coleman might have put it, to "open his legs and show his class". He showed a little less.

His statement in the Commons showed all the signs of having been put through the Treasury wringer. It sounded as if it had once had specifics in it, which had all been taken out. Its timing, nine days after the Budget, said it all.

But, after a Budget which was all about the duty to work, important questions for the welfare state remain. What sort of responsibility do we owe to those who really cannot and should not work? Mr Field did not have the answers. He mentioned poor present-day pensioners. They shall have pilot schemes. (We knew that.) What about the genuinely incapacitated? Tell you later. What about lone parents of children under five? Nothing.

Mr Field teased us by saying there had been much support for his idea of compulsory second pensions, before announcing a further green paper later in the year. He promised "fundamental reform" of the Child Support Agency. Later in the year. He was going to crack down on housing benefit fraud, by checking people's National Insurance numbers. All well and good. But hardly "thinking the unthinkable", which was oversold during the previous rhetorical phase.

The one concrete proposal yesterday was the setting up of a Disability Rights Commission. The lion of welfare reform roared and brought forth a quango. Worse than that, a quango on a bed of cotton-wool rhetoric designed to calm the panic caused by earlier leaks of big cuts in the disability budget.

What was missing was not soundbites or presentational device. What was missing was not a big statement of the philosophy of welfare reform. What was missing in Mr Field's statement was a translation of all that stuff into plain language that relates the government's intentions to the lives of real people. We are not demanding detailed legislative measures; clearly that will take time. But what should have been in the green paper was a statement of how the Government sees the path of welfare spending as a share of national income, and a clear description of the kinds of people who should gain and lose.

Mr Field mentioned the tripling of numbers claiming Incapacity Benefit since 1979. Kick their crutches away! But then he mentioned the 50 per cent of those entitled to Disability Living Allowance who do not claim it. Give their crutches back!

Perhaps he has a plan and it is not for public consumption. That would be a pity because Blairism needs the same kind of clarity as Thatcherism if this lot are to emulate her abilities as a political educator.

Eric Morecambe described the piano-playing of his partner as "the right notes but not necessarily in the right order". With this government it feels not only as if some of the notes are missing, but that the roadshow has come before the reform, the spin before the policy announcement and, now, the policy announcement before the policy. But it would not take too much to fill in the gaps and get the notes in the right order.

Favours. Not fairness

IN the matter of Tony Blair lobbying the Italian prime minister on behalf of Rupert Murdoch, let us be clear about one thing first. This newspaper holds a broadly favourable view of the Labour Government and its leader. We know about the "big picture" and on the whole we approve of it.

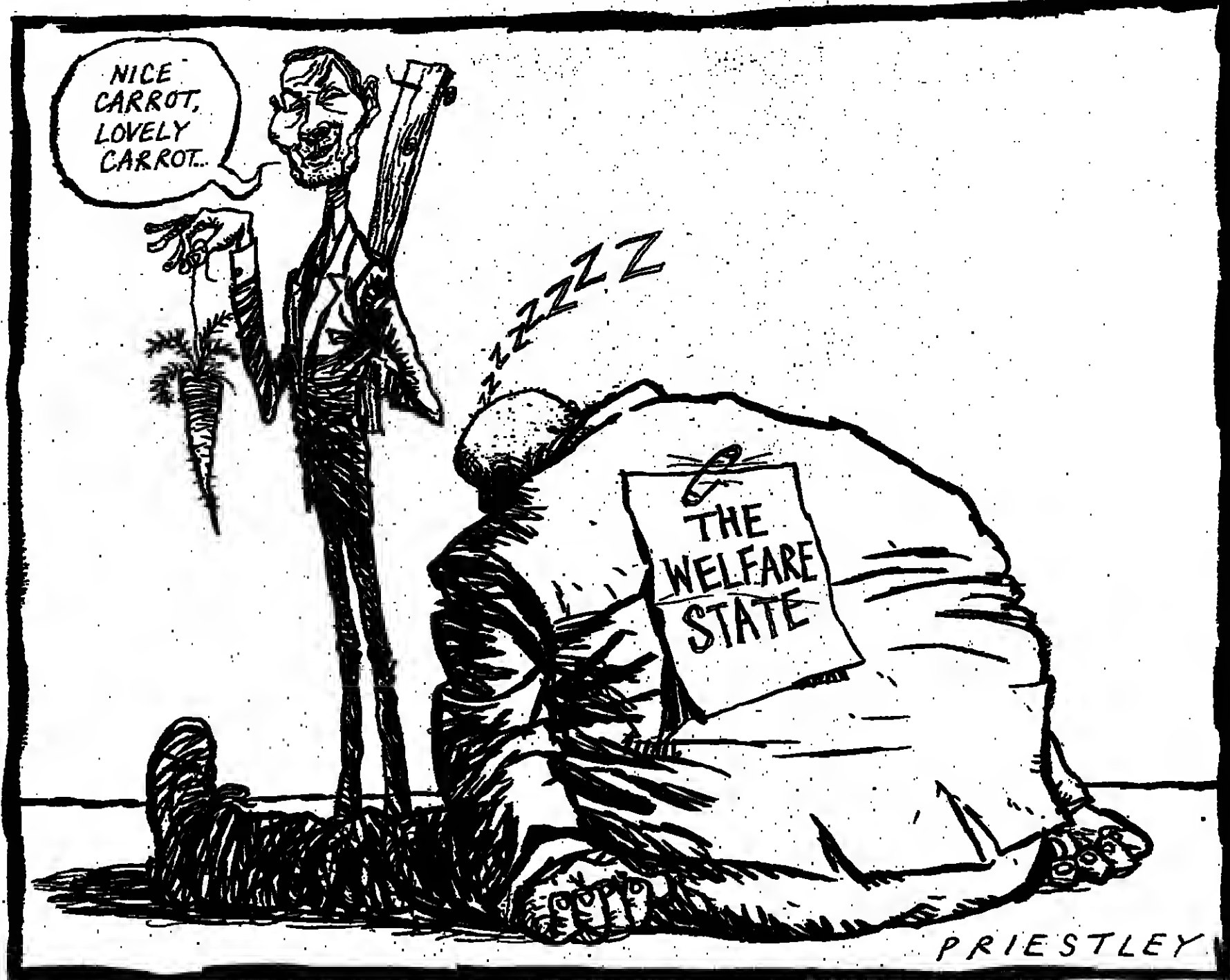
So when we criticise Mr Blair for cosying up to vested interests, we are not animated by prejudice or allowing ourselves to be distracted by title. Mr Blair should not have mentioned Mr Murdoch when he spoke to Romano Prodi on the telephone on Wednesday last week, except to warn him of the slippery qualities of the Australo-American magnate's undertakings in respect of editorial independence and competition.

After he did so, Mr Blair's office should not have tried to mislead journalists who asked legitimate questions about the call. Claiming that Mr Blair could not have "lobbied" Mr Prodi because the call came from Italy is insulting misinformation. And refusing to discuss whether Mr Blair had spoken by phone to Mr Murdoch on the grounds that this would have been a "private conversation" is a disgrace to open government. It only puts off having to answer the inevitable parliamentary questions which will – rightly – be tabled.

Of course, *The Independent* has an interest to declare. We do not approve of Mr Murdoch. We think he is engaged in anti-competitive practices in order to extend his dominant position in the British media market – practices which damage us commercially.

Yesterday the central issue was laid bare, not by us but by the *Financial Times*, which brought its unsentimental business perspective to bear on the matter. "Rupert Murdoch told colleagues last week that he would telephone Tony Blair for help in ascertaining whether the Italian government would block his proposed ESN acquisition of Mediaset, Italy's leading commercial television network."

This sheds an ironic light on the Prime Minister's insistence that the Government would treat Mr Murdoch no differently from any other proprietor – and an even more bitterly ironic light on his pre-election pledge to offer trade unions and employers "fairness not favours". The Downing Street switchboard should now be considered an open helpline for any company considering a foreign takeover, or for any union worried about employment rights.



Fees for students

FROM their comfortable positions, it is charming and natural for Sebastian MacMillan and Ian Johnston (Letters, 25 March) to wish that all the world could enjoy the same privileges at university as they did. Alas, the world, and certainly Britain, is not yet wealthy enough for this to be possible. Given the NHS waiting lists and the deficiencies of state schooling, it is unlikely ever to be so.

For more students, especially those from poor schools and poor families, even to get to university demands fairer sharing of scarce resources. This means that the only way to open the university doors wider is further to reduce costs or to introduce fees. It is then not unjust to expect that those who can afford to make a modest contribution to the cost of their studies do so on behalf of those who cannot. Fees are the instrument of social justice, not its enemy.

In any case, for universities to be wholly dependent on government patronage is to set the clock back to the Middle Ages. Their most cherished attribute is their freedom to oppose conformity and, if it should come to it, the government itself. That prospect makes the current argument about fees look quite small. It would be better for universities to be wholly funded out of fees, leaving it to government to recompense students accordingly. We would then witness a rebirth of higher education in Britain.

Professor Sir GRAHAM HILLS
Inverness

DIANA WARWICK, Chief Executive of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, in her letter defending the policy of charging tuition fees to students (25 March), conveniently did not draw attention to the real injustice for students from low income families. It is they who will have to borrow the full cost of maintenance for each academic year, which will result in them leaving university with a far greater burden of debt than students from more affluent families.

Baroness BLATCH
House of Lords
London SW1

Labour's slave society

I AM one of probably few people who would deny that those who can work necessarily have a "duty" to do so ("Farewell to welfare as Blair orders Britain to work", 26 March).

For most of mankind's existence, before all-embracing states, people had the option, if they did not like, for whatever reason, the society in which they found themselves, to leave and do their best elsewhere, on vacant land. As this option is not available these days, it is very reasonable to expect the state to provide financial compensation for its loss, in the form of a basic guaranteed income.

A society from which there is no exit, and in which all have a duty to work, is a slave society.

GRAHAM ROUNCE
London E2

Energy for the future

I WAS shocked by the comments made by John Battle in the Commons European Legislation Committee on the EU White Paper on Renewable Energy (report, 23 March).

The White Paper is a tempered and realistic assessment of the future potential of renewables, the types of programmes and investments needed to stimulate sustainable markets in Europe and for exports, and the wealth creation which will come of this investment.

The White Paper estimates that, for a net investment of around 95 billion ECU, up to 900,000 new jobs will be created; in 2010, 3 billion ECU in fuel costs will have been saved; reliance on imported fuels will be reduced by 17.5 per cent; carbon dioxide emissions will be cut by 402 million tonnes per year by 2010; and economic growth will be stimulated in deprived regions by the development of renewable energy industries.

Surely a government which came

LETTERS

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Heroin cure

YOUR article "Heroin cure may have killed six" (25 February) says that Mr Tran Khuong Dan "may have covered up the death of up to six patients in his care". The death of only one patient is known. This patient was very sick when he came to the Detoxification Center, and the reason of his death is not yet clear. The family of this patient agreed voluntarily to take their son's body for burial.

Heantos is a medication used for treatment of drug addiction, discovered by Mr Dan in the late Eighties. In 1991 Heantos was tested and evaluated by an MOH scientific committee, and there was a decision to allow its utilisation in the treatment centres belonging to the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs. According to this decision Mr Dan has also to collect and supply further data on Heantos to the MOH for the authorisation of the production and wide use of this medication. This has not yet happened.

In 1996 there was a new decision from MOH on the evaluation of the efficacy and safety of all herbal medications. Heantos is now being evaluated according to the new standards and regulations, and we are waiting for the test results.

Professor Dr TRAN VAN SUNG
Institute of Chemistry
Hanoi, Vietnam

Mitford's at home

MITFORD Hall, in Northumberland, was not the house "immortalised in Jessica [Mitford's] *Hons and Rebels*" ("Talk of the Town", 21 March). The relevant house in her book was the newly built one at Swinbrook, near Burford, Oxfordshire.

When the estate in Northumberland was about to be sold in 1992 (to Freddy and Bruce Shepherd or their company), Jessica was quoted as saying "I do not even know of the place." All the same, she, her sister Nancy and all were, and are, descended from a John Mitford (c1643-1720), the third of 11 children, who left Mitford to seek his fortune in London and, by his marriage to a Sarah Powell in 1671, founded that branch of the family.

DAVID BRUXNER
London SW3

Cost of a computer

I WAS surprised to read the article "Computer in every home for the Millennium" (19 March). I think Derek Wyatt MP's calculations slightly underestimate the scale of such a proposal.

If funding was to be found to provide £1,000 PCs for 23.5 million homes, it would cost £23.5bn, not £240m, which clearly represents only a £10 unit cost for the PCs. Let's hope the Millennium Dome does not make the same scale error in its forecasts.

DAVID PEARSON
Managing Director, Sony UK Ltd
Weybridge, Surrey

My moment of fame

I HAVE long been wanting to boast to a wider public that David Aaronovitch was my babysitter. Is now the moment? (Letter, 24 March)

Fame at last?
PENELOPE WOOLFITT
London N10

Diana margarine

ISUSPECT that a spiritual malaise lies behind the almost desperate quest to raise more and more millions for the Diana Memorial Fund – first, postage stamps, now pots of margarine (report, 25 March; Comment, 26 March), and charity balls in the United States. It is demeaning and degrading.

I fear that we are slipping into the appalling delusion that the pursuit of money, so clearly seen in some boardrooms, among fundholders in offshore trusts and among the Lottery ticket / Premium Bond-buying public, is somehow rendered acceptable if we convince ourselves that we are raising funds for charity. We may indeed end up helping to restore Brighton Pier or the Royal Opera House, but we really wanted to win a million or two.

When Flora margarine puts Princess Diana's image on its product and says that it is donating all the proceeds to the Memorial Fund, it is time for all right-thinking people to cry out. Don't try to fool us, or yourselves. This is advertising. The pursuit of money, even for charity, has its limits.

The Rev RICHARD HAYES
Rector
St Mary Woolnoth
London EC3

A fine England captain

YOUR leading article ("It's just not cricket", 26 March) is misguidedly frivolous about Scottish cricketers. You should remember that the England captain who achieved most notable success over Australia, and ruled that old enemy more than any skipper before or since, was Douglas Robert Jardine.

Of impeccable Scottish descent (though born in India), he captained England in 15 Tests, winning nine and losing just one. Could there be any better reason for England opposition to all Scottish devolution, and the consequent loss of potential Test leadership?

MURRAY HEDGECOCK
London SW14

A sure-fire way to drive young men to acts of rebellion – Scottish dance music



MILES KINGTON

THE Associated Board are the people who hand out grades to children. Well, not to any children. Just to children who are good enough to get grades. I think I got Grade 3 trombone once. I never got any grades for piano playing, because although I was better at piano than trombone, I didn't want to get piano grades for classical playing. I wanted to get piano grades for jazz playing, and that was impossible because they didn't award grades for jazz playing.

Well, they do now. Or at least they are about to do so. If you were to pass the Purcell Room this morning shortly after 11am, and hear the sounds of jazz piano seeping out, it would mean two things. One, that you had supernaturally good hearing, because sound doesn't seep easily out of the Purcell Room. Two, that the Associated Board are holding a press conference to announce the addition of jazz to the syllabus – grades for jazz piano playing and for jazz ensemble playing – and that young

British jazz star Julian Joseph is on hand to help in the proceedings.

Good stuff, but all a bit late for me. When I was fifteen and desperately wanted to learn how to play jazz, there was no encouragement from music teachers and no recognition from the authorities that jazz could be respectable, or even teachable. After all, I already played the piano to a reasonable standard, so I thought it would merely be a question of working out how jazz was played and then playing it.

What I found was that I was already so classically brainwashed that I couldn't do it on the piano. Classical music is all about slavery to the written score, not about making things up. The trouble was, I was a good sight reader. If it was written down and within my technical grasp, I could usually play it straight off. If it wasn't written down, I couldn't begin to handle it. I was the worst possible candidate for jazz. On the piano. Still, at least I had the sense to see that

if I were to take up another instrument and treat it entirely as a jazz instrument, I would have a much better chance of getting somewhere, so I started trombone lessons. I never got very good on trombone but at least, I learnt to play rough and ready jazz, and to improvise as I couldn't on the piano, and I formed a jazz band from my fellow pupils at the far-away boarding school in Scotland to which I had been sent by well-meaning parents (the same one to which Robbie Coltrane was later sent by similar parents).

Now, this is where we see how music education has changed over the years. Today jazz is being admitted to the Associated Board's syllabus. Then, the head music teacher sent for me and said that I was not allowed to form a jazz band.

"You cannot stop me," I said. "No, but I can stop you rehearsing in school music rooms and make life very difficult for you," he said. "But why?"

"Look, Kingston, I have no objection to dance music as such. We all need dance music. But this is a Scottish school! If you form a band, you must play Scottish dance music. Jazz is an alien music! I cannot allow it!"

The prospect of being forced to play Scottish dance music (much more alien to me than jazz was) seemed so appalling that the band and I were forced into direct political action. We were not in fact very politically conscious (except for the bass player, Alexander Cockburn, who was always a better writer than a bass player and has since then developed into one of America's leading left wing journalists) but it occurred to us that most of us also played in the school orchestra and that if we withdrew our labour from the orchestra shortly before an important concert, our strike action might force the authorities to cave in. Amazingly, it did, and we got clearance and rehearsal space for our band, though looking back I think that going on strike

was probably the most enjoyable bit of the episode.

Today, we would be received with open arms and made to take grade exams. I wonder if we would have survived the approval...

Looking back, I realise that almost everything I have ever wanted to do in life – play jazz, write humour, speak Welsh, kick a football so that it bends round the edge of the defensive wall and inside the post – are things that couldn't be taught, or at least couldn't easily be taught then. Now almost all of them can. But if I were at school now, would I actually want to do these officially approved-of things? Would I not look round for something more rebellious? If Alex Cockburn and Robbie Coltrane were back at school now, and were being actively encouraged to be left-wing scribbles or comic actors, would they become something else?

Who knows?

Here is the test by which the Blair project will be judged



DONALD
MACINTYRE
FRANK FIELD'S
PRINCIPLES

IF ANYONE is qualified by his own political history to walk the third way, it's Frank Field. One of George Orwell's more conventionally minded colleagues on the left once said (admirably) that Orwell had a unique capacity to make his friends feel uncomfortable. Field is rather like that.

As Orwell was to the fellow travellers of his day, so Field was to much of the conventional Labour wisdom of the 1980s. He stated and restated the link between individual rights and duties that permeates yesterday's Green Paper before Blairism was even thought of. He saw the virtues of compulsory savings for privately provided pensions when the idea was wholly taboo in his own party. And, around the time of Margaret Thatcher's fall in 1990, he thought, as a Labour backbencher, that she shouldn't be pushed out by her ministers and told her so.

Yet this was – and is – exactly the same Field who embodies to an extreme the ascetic ideal of plain living and high thinking, who resigned on a left-wing principle from the Labour front bench to vote against, rather than merely abstain from voting for, the ban on trade unions at GCHQ, and who when he says, as he did in his Commons statement yesterday, that he has learned most about welfare from his own poor constituents in Birkenhead, actually means it.

Recently, of course, this unusual figure has been cast as co-star in one of the great Whitehall soap operas, the Frank and Harriet show. The exceedingly well documented running battles between Field and Harman within the Department of Social Security have provided hours of harmless and not so harmless entertainment for their colleagues. They have abated now, as Harman's demure presence on the Treasury bench yesterday beside Field was intended to indicate. But that won't stop a quite widespread view among the political classes that the most interesting aspect of yesterday's statement is that it was delivered by Field and not Harman and that this means Harman will be sacked from the Cabinet and Field will take her job.

It isn't. It is much more important than that. For all the ritual complaints that it poses at least as many questions as it answers, the 96 pages of Field's Green Paper tell us quite a lot about how and why the Blair government wants to reform welfare. True, the question of how compulsory saving for pensioners should be extended to those who don't do it now will be left to John Denham's policy paper later in the year. Sure, the Green Paper is thin on how alternatives to the state – such as Field's beloved mutuals – can provide social insurance for risks from long-term illness to redundancy. But what is clear is the distinctly Blairite view that, while "The UK needs more welfare not less", it is no longer up to the taxpayer to fund it. And yes, in spelling out how the huge, exponentially rising costs of £11bn worth of housing benefit means tenants aren't interested in the rents they pay and landlords can charge what they like, it admits there aren't easy answers. But it isn't hard to infer that a wholly new system of financing rented housing costs is on the way. And there is quite a lot else lurking in the detail.

Disability is a rather good example. The decision not to means test Disability Living Allowance is a real one, the outcome of a vigorous behind-the-scenes Whitehall debate in which David Blunkett, among others, expressed outrage at some DSS proposals to make it no longer a universal benefit. Yes, the Green Paper hints that more objective medical testing may be needed to support DLA claims – though it also evenhandedly points out that only between 40 and 60 per cent of those who need it are claiming it. But the paper has also recognised that if more of the disabled can be encouraged to work, employers will have to halt their wholesale discrimination against them, which is why the newly announced Disability Rights Commission is necessary. Equally it is emphatic on the urgent need to abandon the barmy system under which incapacity benefit is used as a "simple but expensive route for the Government to keep the unemployment numbers down". Instead of a benefit that acts as a positive incentive to stay at home – and which is either paid in full or not paid at all – it proposes a new test, for new claimants, which will allow recipients to keep some benefit and do some work. And savings, the paper firmly promises, will be used to give more support for those too disabled to work.

This matters partly because the costs are huge – incapacity benefit costs £7.8bn. But the section on disability also illustrates some of the Green Paper's most important themes. The first, as for the budget, is the virtues of economic independence through work. The old Stiles doctrine that we would end the century with fewer people at work and all of us working less, has no place in Blair-Brown-Fieldism. Another is that universal benefits are here to stay. On the one hand, there is nothing in the Green Paper that stops Gordon Brown taxing DLA for

Field is a man for
brilliant insights rather
than programmes

the very well off as he plans to tax child benefit. Redistribution through taxation of benefits is not taboo. But it looks as though ending them altogether, and risking dislodging the prosperous from the tax and benefit system, is. The doctrine that services for the poor mean poor services has largely won against "affluence testing". Thirdly – there is quite a lot to reassure the disabled and those currently receiving incapacity benefit. Which illustrates another theme: the need to build a national consensus for change. To reform the welfare state between now and 2020, you have to win elections to do it. And if that means moving slowly, so be it.

Governments face a chronic difficulty. If they produce a fixed blueprint and then force through legislation (the poll tax springs to mind) everyone asks why they didn't consult. If they set out the contours of change without filling in all the details, the same critics ask "where's the beef?" Fortunately, the run-up to yesterday's Green Paper illustrates why it was needed. Opening a broad national debate certainly beats sleepwalking into a row on ill-thought-out lone benefit cuts and a lot of terrifying leaks on plans for the disabled. Field is anyway a man for brilliant insights rather than programmes. Blair's own hand can be detected in much of the Green Paper. Wholesale abolition of means testing or a big-bang move to compulsory private pensions isn't what the paper is about. And if Field had to modify some of his more expensive ambitions, that's the price you pay for being in power. But don't believe this is all fine words and little else. Field's statement yesterday set the test by which the long-term failure and success of the Blair project will be judged.

The plight of the thirtysomething female who hasn't met 'Mr Right'



SUZANNE
MOORE
ON CHOICE
AND BABIES

AS I AM still, for a few months at least, a thirtysomething woman, I feel compelled to make a contribution to the "crisis" that is supposedly in our midst. Luckily, I still belong to this media-created category. Swamped by articles, books and TV programmes about attractive but lonely thirtysomethings, Bridget Joneses without the humour or the publishing contract, I feel occasional sympathy for them, but mostly intense irritation.

What is occurring here is nothing less than a backlash against feminism and, as always, it is women themselves who are colluding in this backlash. The problem of the thirtysomething female who hasn't met "Mr Right" – ie Mr Big-Salary, Mr Devastatingly-Good-Looking, Mr Let-Me-Inseminate-You-Immediately, Mr I-Will-Give-You-A-Home-That-Looks-Like-Something-Out-Of-Elle-Decor – is simple. Her problems are caused by being able to have a choice.

Freely available contraception and abortion, you know the right to control our own fertility, those little things that generations of women have fought so hard for, have even died for, has enabled the modern woman to choose not to have babies. It has meant that the average woman is not pregnant or breast feeding for 14 years of her life. It has meant that sex can be for pleasure as well as procreation. And this, surely, most of us would agree, is a jolly good thing. I point this out only because choice, for the thirtysomething, have-it-all whingers is somehow deemed to be a bad thing.

Unfortunately, if you happen to be a female with an average reproductive system, it is assumed that despite having chosen not to have a baby for a good 20 years, unconsciously, subconsciously, or better still, on television, you'd better reveal all about the ticking of your biological clock. You see babies in parks and you want one. Your friends have got them and you haven't. I understand. I feel much the same way about a Cornran sofa. Perhaps my soft-furnishings clock is ticking and I will simply go doolally if I don't get one soon.

The message here is simple: despite what you might think about women's increasing economic independence and freedom, they can, as always, be



If you want a baby that badly, follow Jodie Foster's example and try AID Capital

reduced to one thing, biology. All those successful young women out there might look good to you, they may appear to be having a fabulous time with their mates, but don't be fooled for one second. When it comes down to it, they are little more than waiting wombs. The hole in their lives can only be plugged by one thing, an infant that emerges blinking into the light fully dressed in Baby Gap.

In order to get that baby,

sick of the self deception currently masquerading as social crisis.

If women really want to have babies, are overtaken with an obsessive desire to reproduce but have not yet met the right man, why don't they just have one?

If women really want to have babies, are overtaken with an obsessive desire to reproduce but have not yet met the right man, why don't they just have one?

what all these women need is not love, equality, or even friendship, but, to put it crudely, ejaculation. Well, I'm sure this might make certain men feel useful, even purposeful, but it makes me feel bloody depressed. In the midst of the Nineties "gender quake", what we have before our eyes is yet another tired rerun of the old biology-is-decay myth, and it is about time some of these women were as honest with themselves as they are prepared to be in front of any old television crew.

If you get to your late 30s and you could have had, but haven't had, a baby, perhaps you didn't really want one. Perhaps you chose other things instead and maybe that's not so bad. Of course, only a heretic or a man would say such a thing. Or perhaps I will, because I am

understand why anyone would refuse to make the choices that I have made.

But I see it as a choice and I see that choice as a luxury that should not now be described as a terrible problem. There is no power without responsibility. That must stand whether you are male or female. The power to control our biology means that women must accept responsibility for the choices they make.

What is so galling about the supposed Bridget Jones – which I mistakenly took to be a satire rather than an accurate social survey – is that these women are on one level success stories. They have careers, nice homes, good looks, but the men to meet their desires are either engaged, in a way that public tastemakers are engaged, or second rate. Women then either have

every time you turn on the TV serve a useful purpose? I suppose it does if you are a desperate filmmaker, a fundamentalist Christian, a women's magazine editor or Melanie Phillips, or perhaps a man. It must soften the blow that men are no longer officially breadwinners to know that at the end of a hard working, or non-working day, that it is only you who can give women what it is they really need.

The conversion of dippy new-age thinking, right-wing fundamentalism and the susceptibility of women to old-fashioned myths of romance is frightening to behold. Having just spent a week in the States watching a miraculous combination of Jerry Springer (My Sister Slept With All My Three Husbands), Christian evangelists and a new-age channel in San Francisco called Quest, it became clear they were all pumping out the same message: that there is a special person out there just waiting for you.

Don't sell yourself short by sleeping with anyone else until you meet them as this denotes low self-esteem. When you do meet them, sex will be ecstatic because the only true sexual happiness is to be found within a monogamous relationship. Well, this is all just great but whatever happened to women's sexual as well as financial freedom? Whatever happened to the idea that maybe one person cannot fulfil all of your needs for all of your life? Or am I just being old fashioned?

There is a link between sex and work. Just as we're encouraged to believe that there are no longer jobs for life, but skills for life, so, too, serial monogamy is the new marriage. Porfivito people surely will have several lovers over a lifetime, not just the one. We all know this is true. That is why I say that what is happening is part of the backlash – the reinstatement of an old emotional order when the economic one is so clearly changing – and should not surprise us.

Modern women should do whatever it is they want to do. In the meantime, I would like to suggest that no-one is allowed to use the phrases Mr Right, biological clock or thirtysomething. In other words, to be brutal, get pregnant or don't, just stop whinging about it. Do what Jodie Foster did, and give artificial insemination a go, if you need to. If you want to act emotionally as though you were living in the 18th century, that's up to you. Just don't demand contraception, abortion, a career or even, Gnd forbid, a Cornran sofa.

Are blacks programmed to die in custody?



ANDREW
MARR'S WEEK

YOU WANT to know the trouble with blacks? I'll tell you the trouble with blacks. Squeeze their necks a bit, and they just die on you. It's a well-known fact. Or, rather, that's the implication of what Richard Tilt, director-general of the Prison Service, said on *Newsnight* this week, after the inquest jury decided that Alton Manning had been unlawfully killed during a violent struggle at Blakenhurst prison.

Tilt, quite extraordinarily, suggested the problem was that people of Afro-Caribbean background were likelier to suffer "positional asphyxia" because "there is a physiological difference" between them and whites. As Jason Bennett and Andrew Buzcombe reported in yesterday's paper, the Prison Service helpfully explained that "positional asphyxia... is when they are held in a certain position. It is when there is pressure put down on the windpipe."

So, in plain terms, black people keep getting killed in prison because there's something funny about their necks. It is nothing whatever to do with racism. Terribly sad and all that, but it's a medical fact – according to Tilt, there is "evidence emerging" about that.

Well, there's a convenient discovery.

– the dreaded "black people dying in custody gene", hitherto unknown to medical science. It sounds very like the physiological fact that black people have small brains or high libidos, and other similar classics. You might have expected to find it in a Southern plantation in the 1850s, but to hear it coming from man in charge of prisons in a liberal democracy is shocking. This man has a lot of explaining to do; and if New Labour means what it says about racism, there will be a wholly justified eruption of anger in the Commons and Whitehall.

One of the things that has changed around Docklands since my return to the paper – nicely described by a colleague as a "reforestation" – is the fast-growing network of cables and steel skeletons in and around the Millennium Dome. But why, writes John Blundell, general director of the Institution of Economic Affairs, is the jamboree happening at Greenwich – or, more specifically, why has Greenwich the prime meridian of longitude? The short answer, he explains, is the might of the Royal Navy rather over a century ago: "In 1884, the International Meridian Conference was held in Washington DC and Greenwich was just one of a number

of candidates: the others included Rome, Jerusalem, the Great Pyramid and the Canary Islands. British naval power predominated over religious and historical considerations and Greenwich got the nod."

Had the conference been held today, then presumably the prime meridian would have been in Washington itself, from where the US Navy is controlled, and not Loodoo at all.

Speaking of genes, Tony Blair's achievement in delivering a speech in French to the National Assembly may help break the stereotype that there is something in the British gene-pool which disables us from speaking foreign.

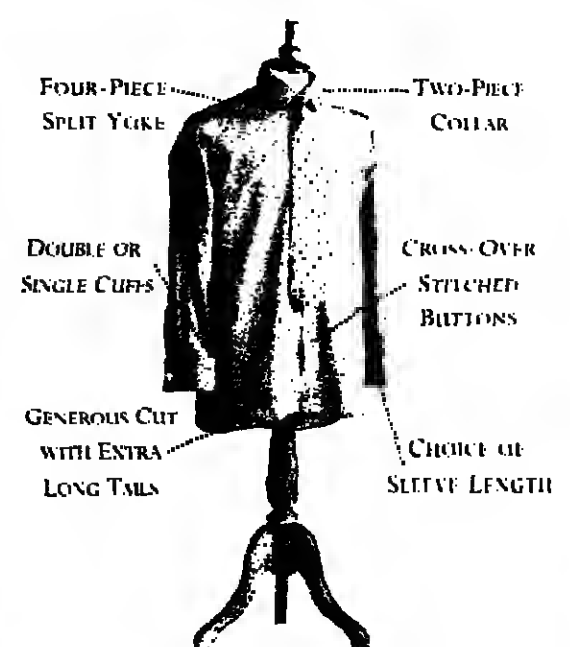
The best tale about a British leader failing to communicate in French has Winston Churchill addressing an eminent audience in Paris after the war. Intending to explain that when he looked back over his career, it could be split into two phases, Churchill cleared his throat, glared over his spectacles and announced to the startled gathering: "Messieurs et Madames, Quand je regard mon derriere, je vois qu'il se develope en deux parties egal." I suppose he probably never said that; or if he did, that it was a grumbly Churchillian joke. But it's too good a story to properly research.

Of all the week's unlikely stories so far, however, the least likely seeming was the customs alert for Iraqi anthrax smuggled into these isles in containers, including duty-free Scotch and scent bottles. It was the kind of thing that would be implausible in a bad airport novel, a caricature scoop out of *Drop the Dead Donkey* – and, more than that, a *Sun* exclusive, too. Yet it was, in all essentials, true. Anthrax! The ultimate nightmare.

Or it is for me, anyway. As a child, our family holidays were in Wester Ross, a dazzling, bleak paradise with an offshore little nightmare island, Gruinard. Gruinard, silent and sinister, was the anthrax island, poisoned in Ministry of Defence experiments and then uninhabitable, the spores still there to the earth.

For me, it fused into then-common gloom about nuclear holocaust and the evil at the heart of things. I don't suppose teenagers now have any idea how threatening it seemed, in the era of "Protect and Survive". Now the pervasive fear of imminent destruction has lifted – a great advance in human happiness which future historians will probably never think of mentioning. And Gruinard? Clean again.

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BDB in talks to offer Viacom channels for autumn launch

By Peter Thal Larsen

British Digital Broadcasting, the terrestrial television group, is in talks with Viacom about offering the US broadcaster's channels, which include MTV and Nickelodeon, as part of its offering when it launches its service in the autumn.

Granada and Carlton, the television groups which each own 50 per cent of BDB, are ready to drop some of the channels they had been preparing to supply in order to

make way for the new programming. The news has prompted fears that this may reduce the value of BDB to its shareholders.

Executives at BDB have become increasingly concerned that its package of channels would not be enough to tempt viewers when the service launches.

When digital terrestrial television is launched in the autumn it will carry 30 channels, 15 of which will be operated by BDB. In its licence application, BDB said that Granada and Carlton would each supply

four channels. The remainder would be channels based on BBC programmes supplied by UKTV, the corporation's joint venture with Flextech. The service would also offer Sky Sports 1, Sky Screen One and Sky Screen Two to viewers who were willing to pay more for them.

However, Granada and Carlton may now drop some of their programmes in favour of Viacom's channels. The group operates music channels MTV and VH1 as well as Nickelodeon and the Paramount Comedy Channel.

Michiel Bakker, MTV's European managing director, confirmed that Viacom and BDB were in talks. "They want to make a success of their business," he said. "The line up they presented originally had no familiar channels."

However, analysts now question the value of BDB to its shareholders. They fear that bringing in more programming from third parties will dilute BDB's potential for its owners. Earlier this week, NatWest Markets, the stockbroker, reduced its valuation of BDB from £920m to £200m.

Other observers pointed out that, although Carlton and Granada would suffer by not supplying their own programmes, they would benefit if the entire platform proved more successful as a result of taking on third party programming.

Carlton and Granada may not have to sacrifice their own channels for long. BDB is understood to be keen to take over spare capacity on Licence A, the bundle of digital channels currently reserved for Channel 5 and Welsh language broadcaster S4C. Channel 5, for example, has been allocated

three channels but only wants to use one.

Advances in the technology used to compress digital signals may also increase the number of channels available. Nigel Warrsley, the Carlton director who will continue to run BDB until Stephen Grabiner arrives from United News & Media, recently said that he expected the number of channels that the broadcaster could carry would double in just a few years.

Nevertheless, these changes are unlikely to be ready in time for BDB's launch in the autumn.

Revamp puts 2,000 jobs on line at CWC

By Michael Harrison

THE cable and telephone operator Cable & Wireless Communications is preparing to unveil a sweeping restructuring which could result in a reduction of up to 2,000 jobs throughout the company.

The 12,000-strong workforce is due to be given details of the reorganisation next month following a board meeting in the next week to decide on the level of the job reductions.

The cost-cutting drive follows an "optimum resourcing review" put in train by Graham Wallace, CWC's new chief executive. He has been seeking ways to make the organisation leaner and to align its structure more closely with its markets since his arrival last year. A large number of the job reductions are likely to be among backroom staff as CWC introduces more efficient procedures into the business.

Insiders insisted that the review could create new posts elsewhere in the company which could reduce the net level of job losses substantially.

The review, which has been carried out by the accountants Coopers & Lybrand, is understood to have recommended radical action to refocus CWC on growth markets such as data processing and the small- and medium-sized business sector.

Since the creation of CWC through a four-way merger of Mercury, Nynex CableComms, Bell Cablemedia and Videotron, the workforce has remained static at 12,000 even though the group has reduced the number of call centres from 10 to three and merged its five network control centres onto two sites.

There has been a recruitment freeze since the beginning of this year while the Coopers & Lybrand review is completed. A spokesman called the possibility of up to 2,000 job reductions "the worst case scenario being banded around within the organi-

sation". Last year 400 managers went from the 1,000 CWC inherited at the time of the merger, producing significant cost savings. But the Coopers report has identified further substantial scope for productivity improvements through the incorporation of more information technology.

The spokesman declined to comment on the level of job reductions or how many new vacancies could be created as part of the overhaul, pointing out that before the recruitment freeze there were 3,000 vacancies in the group.

In order to reduce the redundancy bill, CWC is likely to offer jobs elsewhere in the organisation to those whose posts are being made redundant. Natural wastage is also expected to account for a sizeable number of reductions because staff turnover in telecoms is above the industry average.

Since Mr Wallace's arrival CWC has embarked on a £400m upgrade of its long-distance fibre network. The investment is in addition to the £1bn being spent each year to build out the cable network. It has also unveiled its plans for entering the digital market through a programming link-up with BSkyB and a software deal with Netscape and Oracle to give customers high-speed access to the Internet.

CWC has a just over 2 million customers, of whom 760,000 are cable television subscribers. It will launch the digital service this autumn offering access to up to 200 channels. There has also been a high turnover in its marketing department, with two senior executives departing in the last year. The current advertising campaign, which is costing £50m, oo top of the annual £50m marketing spend, has had mixed reviews.

One of the areas CWC intends to target for expansion is data processing. In January this year it acquired the data company Anie for £47m. At present, data communications make up about 10 per cent of telecoms traffic, but CWC believes this could grow to 50 per cent within five years.



Together: ICI's £350m purchase brings together two famous DIY brands

Cuprinol for Dulux dog

By Michael Harrison

SOME of the most famous names in DIY changed hands yesterday after ICI bought the home improvements business of Williams Holdings for £350m. Among the brands included in the sale are Cuprinol, Polyfilla, Polycell and Hammerite.

Williams is using most of the sale proceeds to return £300m of capital to shareholders representing 8 per cent of its equity. The group, which is now focused on fire protection and security products, also announced plans for the flotation next year of its Portuguese paints business Robbialac which is expected to raise another £100m. ICI said it would integrate the newly-acquired business with its paints division,

which includes the Dulux brand, to strengthen its presence in the European decorative products market.

The business being bought by ICI employs 1,250 people and made profits of £34m on a turnover of £185m in 1997. It has factories in the UK, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy and last year two-thirds of sales were outside the UK.

Cuprinol is one of the DIY market's biggest selling wood preservatives while the rust treatment Hammerite is sold right around the world.

The sale brings proceeds from Williams' disposal programme to £500m. Earlier this month it agreed to sell its US home products business, NuTone, for £150m and 15 months ago it disposed of its other home and DIY brands, including Rawlplug.

Next shocks with profits warning

By Nigel Cope

NEXT, the high-street retailer that has proved a phenomenal success over the past seven years, shocked investors yesterday when it issued a profits warning caused by buying mistakes in women's clothing and childrenswear. The company said it had overstocked before Christmas, understocked after it and introduced too many higher-priced high-fashion ranges at the expense of "classic" items.

Next plunged by 24 pence, closing 173.5p down at 544p and wiping £644m off its market value, as analysts scrambled to downgrade their profits forecasts. The company's place in the FTSE-100 will be under threat when the constituents are reviewed in June if the shares do not stage a dramatic recovery.

The warning is a blow to Lord Wolfson, who recently announced his intention to step down as chairman of the company in May and who, together with David Jones, chief executive, has been credited with rescuing the company from the brink of collapse in the early 1990s.

"Let's be open and honest about it, we've made a mistake," Lord Wolfson said. "Maybe we're allowed one, I don't know."

Mr Jones said: "I'm very sad this has happened but we can gain advantage from it. People will realise that they don't have a divine right to be successful."

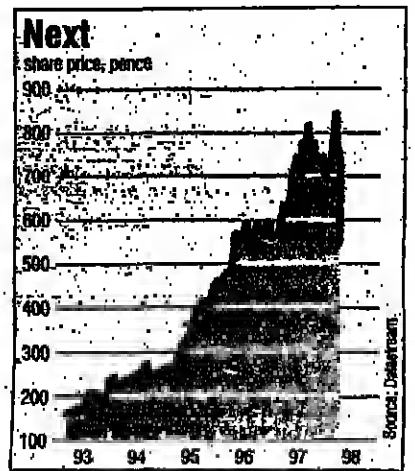
Analysts expressed surprise at the severity of the warning, though there had been rumours of poor trading. Julie Ramshaw at Morgan Stanley said: "It is certainly serious but it is an enduring problem? I don't think so. Next is still one of the best clothing companies, with a strong brand and good stores." Nick Bubb at SG Securities added: "It shows that they are human. These are the kind of mistakes that can happen in fashion. But it is a good brand and the company has a strong balance sheet. The question is how long it will take for the City to forgive."

The problems started before Christmas, when the group overstocked with autumn/winter stock resulting in a much bigger January sale to shift £50m-£60m of unsold merchandise. The company's buyers then over-reacted and stocked too little merchandise for the spring/summer collection. The result was that Next's shops and its directory were short of merchandise

in a number of their best-selling lines. Hilary Santell, Next's womenswear product director, resigned around Christmas time after a period of work because of a riding accident.

The company said this, together with the departure of another designer, may have caused problems but they denied her departure was related to the profits warning.

Next also said its internal controls had failed and would be strengthened. Christmas Angelides, the former head of menswear buying, has taken over the womenswear ranges. "I am not going to point the finger at any individual," Mr Jones said. "If it's anyone's fault, it's mine as chief ex-



cutive." The impact on trading has been dramatic, with sales in the Next shops down by 1.5 per cent in spite of a 12 per cent increase in selling space.

First-half profits will now be lower than last year's £67m. Analysts have cut their full-year forecast from £120m to £117.5m.

The company said the first signs of problems came in November, when the group's Directory preview catalogue was distributed to 25,000 customers. But with the long lead times in fashion it was not possible to make adjustments to the ranges in time.

The profits warning overshadowed Next's results for last year, which showed an increase in profits from £159m to £184m. Next has been one of the brightest stars in the retail firmament in the past seven years, during which its shares have risen from 13p to a high of 835p last month.

Outlook, page 23

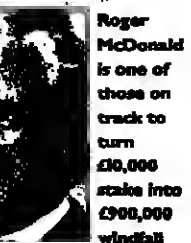
Rail directors scoop £4.4m jackpot

By Michael Harrison

FIVE directors of Thames Trains yesterday shared in a £4.4m bonanza following the sale of the privatised rail operator to a bus company.

The Go-Ahead Group, which already owned 65 per cent of the shares, is buying out the remainder, netting profits of nearly £900,000 for each of the directors who held a 25 per cent stake.

The five, led by managing director Roger McDonald, each invested £10,000 to buy 10,000 shares in Thames Trains. They will be sitting on £880,000 each



Roger McDonald is one of those on track to turn £10,000 stakes into £900,000 windfalls

following the sale, just 17 months after the business was bought from the Government. Over the same period punctuality on Thames Trains has fallen to the point where automatic customer discounts are triggered. And the latest customer satisfaction survey by

Joho O'Brien, the franchising director, shows increasing numbers of complaints about on-board comfort and the condition of station toilets.

Apart from Mr McDonald, the four other directors sharing in the bonanza are Christopher Scanlon, Nicholas Dilsley, Kevin Harrison and David Raymond.

About 250 employees of Thames Trains who bought shares at the time of privatisation will also receive a windfall, sharing in a £1.7m profit worth an average of £6,800.

According to the latest Opra figures, punctuality on Thames Trains was 84.5 per cent last November. This com-

parates with its charter standard of 92 per cent and the 89 per cent figure at which it has to start paying discounts to season ticket holders.

The company operates services between London Paddington and Oxford via Maidenhead and Reading. It also has a service between Reading and Gatwick airport. Thames Trains has six years left of its seven and a half year franchise awarded in October, 1996 and is receiving subsidies worth £28m a year falling to zero by the end of the franchise period.

In the nine months to the end of June, 1997 it made pre-

tax profits of £700,000 and had net assets at that date of £600,000.

Mr O'Brien said that as part of the takeover, Go-Ahead has agreed to a number of service improvements. It is to spend an additional £500,000 on station facilities, improve compensation arrangements under the Passengers' Charter and introduce a through service between Oxford and Bristol by October of this year at the latest.

Go-Ahead has also undertaken to introduce bus/rail through-ticketing from at least five destinations from September.

Flotation of National Grid left consumers short-changed

ELECTRICITY customers missed out on a bigger rebate when the National Grid was floated in 1995 because the Government underestimated the value of part of the business by 50 per cent and ignored tax breaks enjoyed by the company and its shareholders.

A report from the National Audit Office today shows the DTI valued the Grid's pump storage business at £500m for the purposes of determining how much the company had increased in value since privatisation in 1990.

Two weeks after the flotation, the pump storage business was sold to Mission Energy of the US for £680m.

The NAO also says that the sum to which customers were entitled might have been as high as £1.5bn, had all the tax allowances enjoyed by the Grid and its shareholders been included in the calculations.

In the event they shared a total of £1.18bn which worked out at £52 per customer or a 17 per cent reduction on the average domestic bill. The aim of the Government was to ensure that profits on the flotation of the Grid, which was divided up between the 12 regional electricity companies on privatisation, was split 50:50 between customers and shareholders. Ignoring the tax breaks, the split

was 48:52 but included them the customer discount was only 36 per cent of the increase.

The report says that the DTI was concerned that the owners of the Grid might have abandoned the flotation if it had insisted on a bigger rebate for customers than was achieved.

However, the NAO says that had the DTI obtained an independent valuation of the pumped storage business, it would have strengthened its hands in negotiations.

Although the rebate was worth £52 only £31 of this was paid from the Grid, the rest coming from taxpayers and non-domestic electricity customers.

Yesterday in the markets

STOCK MARKETS

Indices	Close	Change	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5908.60	-62.20	-1.04	6105.80	4.183.10
FTSE 250	5515.40	-29.00	-0.52	5544.40	4.384.20
FTSE 350	2840.90	-27.10	-0.95	2917.00	2075.70
FTSE All Share	2771.33	-24.52	-0.88	2838.77	2056.07
FTSE SmallCap	2630.70	4.50	0.17	2626.20	2182.10
FTSE MidCap	1412.10	-2.20	-0.16	1414.30	1225.20
FTSE AIM	1058.40	-0.30	-0.03	1110.90	965.90
Dow Jones	8843.16	-28.14	-0.33	8859.24	5358.73
Nikkei	16800.02	22.28	1.34	20510.79	14488.21
Hang Seng	11757.88	-52.75	-0.45	11820.31	7088.13
Dax	5039.76	-58.66	-1.12	5106.19	3192.33

INTEREST RATES

Money Market Rates	3 month 1 yr	5 year	10 year	Long term	Yield (%)
UK	7.57	1.18	7.59	5.91	-1.70
US	5.88	-0.07	5.84	-0.43	5.84
Japan	0.75	0.17	0.70	-0.01	1.83
Germany	3.54	0.29	3.50	0.38	-1.07
Bond Yields	10 year	15 year	20 year	Long term	Yield (%)
UK	7.57	1.18	7.59	5.91	-1.70
US	5.88	-0.07	5.84	-0.43	5.84
Japan	0.75	0.17	0.70	-0.01	1.83
Germany	3.54	0.29	3.50	0.38	-1.07

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
Dollar	1.5860	+1.15c
DM	3.0743	+1.31p
Yen	217.26	+¥1.40
£/¥	108.10	+0.40
\$/DM	0.5152	-0.41p
DM/DM	1.8221	-0.47p
DM/DM	1.8221	-0.47p
DM/DM	1.8221	-0.47p
DM/DM	1.8221	-0.47p

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.4071	Italy (lira)	2.941
Austria (schillings)	20.88	Japan (yen)	213.57
Belgium (francs)	61.27	Malta (lira)	0.6408
Canada (\$)	2.3010	Netherlands (guilders)	3.3475
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8639	Norway (kroner)	12.37
Denmark (kroner)	11.40	Portugal (escudos)	302.73
Finland (markka)	9.0893	Spain (pesetas)	251.43
France (francs)	9.9538	South Africa (rand)	7.9879
Germany (marks)	2.9636	Sweden (kroner)	12.97
Greece (drachmes)	516.59	Switzerland (francs)	2.0396
Hong Kong (\$)	12.58	Turkey (lira)	386.605
Ireland (pounds)	1.0793	USA (\$)	1.6360

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

معلومات الأعمال

Next's costs for year image

Melka

01279 721 520

Next success story starts to wear thin



OUTLOOK
ON LORD WOLFSON'S
RUN OF BAD LUCK
WHY THERE SHOULD
BE MORE TAX BREAKS
FOR FILM, AND CLARE
SHORT'S BLINDING
FLASH ON THE ROAD
TO DAMASCUS

THE higher they fly, the harder they fall. Such is the fate of Next, whose reputation as the retail success story of the decade this morning has a bit of a rip in the yarn.

The City was so accustomed to the relentless outperformance of this company that everyone had started to believe it was invincible. Perhaps the company's fashion buyers had started to believe it too. At any rate, they took their eye off the ball last year, first ordering clothes that were too trendy and expensive, then going all cautious and leaving the shops short of stock. This may have had something to do with the fact that the company's head of women's wear buying was absent for a prolonged period after a riding accident. Whatever the cause, some irrational exuberance was followed in short order by a wave of unwarranted conservatism.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about Next's problems is that they hadn't happened before. Next has enjoyed 14 consecutive seasons of successful buying, which is about as good as it gets given the vagaries of fashion. The real let-down was in the group's checking procedures which failed to recognise an imbalance in the women's and children's ranges.

The good news for Next is that it knows what the problems are and can now set about correcting them. The only unknown is whether the confidence of Next's buyers may have been affected. The other element to this story for the superstitiously minded is that it tops off a run of bad luck for Lord Wolfson, who is stepping down as chairman in May. Up until recently, he could do no wrong as far as

the City was concerned and no doubt he was hoping to go out, basking in the glow of a share price that had risen by a factor of 64 between 1991 and last month. Now he is bowing out on a profits warning. Meanwhile, with his GUS hat on, his bid for Metromail, an American database company, has become mired in legal difficulties, his £1.6bn offer for Argos, which had looked like a foregone conclusion, now seems more finely balanced. As any general will tell you, nobody fights on three fronts and wins. No wonder he was looking a little tired yesterday.

With the premium on Next shares gone and with his departure from the company looming, perhaps he will now act on one of the stock market's favourite takeover rumours. Maybe, just maybe, he will dump Argos and launch a bid for Next instead.

British films need more help

ALL INDUSTRIES need to fight for attention, love and favour from ministers, but the film industry does rather seem to get more than its fair share. It even has its own think-tank in the Department of Culture, the Film Policy Review Group, and Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, is constantly banging on about the need to do more to help.

It's easy to be cynical about the reasons for this, and no doubt there is a large element of the luvvie factor in it. So much easier to get in the door if you are Dick-

ie Attenborough, David Putnam or Kenneth Branagh, than plain old Joe Bloggs of Amalgamated Widgets. But there are good reasons for it too. Despite Brit Pop and Cool Britannia, the UK has an entertainment trade deficit with the United States running to billions of dollars a year.

And despite our wealth of creative talent and expertise, film in Britain is still not much more than a cottage industry which struggles to compete against the big battalions of Hollywood, with its unparalleled access to capital and huge investment in production, marketing and distribution. Even with a following wind, the British industry can never hope to catch up with the US, whose success springs from the unified culture of its vast domestic market. Language differences will stop that from ever being mirrored within the European Union. All the same, there's probably more that can be done to correct the balance.

The package of measures announced by Mr Smith this week are welcome enough, but they are not going to make much of a difference. Normally, it would not be right to support any kind of industry specific subsidy, aid or tax break, but in the case of film, this might just about be justified. As Mr Smith's policy unit has pointed out, the film industry has enormous potential for creating the sort of employment most of us have come to want and expect from the modern economy. The 100 per cent write off for film finance, introduced in the July Budget was a step in the right direction, but by limiting the amount to £15m, the Treasury has ensured

a poor take-up and guaranteed that big budget foreign inspired movies cannot take advantage of it. It's time to do more.

Multinationals are not the villains

OF ALL the people in the Labour Government who might have been expected to resist the stampede towards hard-headed pragmatism, Clare Short must have topped the list. Against the herd, she's tried to remain a passionate idealist. Now even our Secretary of State for International Development seems to have swung behind the nasty capitalists. Yesterday she lent her support to research which concludes that the Multilateral Agreement on Investment would be in the interests of developing countries. Given that many aid and environmental organisations have remained fervently against this agreement, believing it to be a multi-nationals charter, this is quite a turn up.

The MAI has proved an astonishingly contentious proposal for something that on the face of it seems entirely sensible. The MAI began life as a plan among member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - the first world - for overseas investors to be treated in exactly the same way as domestic investors. The idea was to outlaw discrimination against foreign capital, which even in the developed world takes many and varied forms - local content rules for example. The controversy arose

from suggestions that developing countries should, in time, sign up too. This fired up a coalition of protesters from aid agencies and environmental campaigners, who see multinationals as exploiters of the world's poor. They wanted to tag on to the MAI additional requirements for minimum labour and environmental standards.

There are good reasons for concern about Americanisation of the planet. The way things are going it's only a matter of time before McDonalds open at Everest base camp. Titanic is already showing in Kerala in Southern India. Even so, poor countries are only going to become prosperous ones if they get the know-how and market access that big foreign investors bring. Any possibility of discrimination, and international capital will simply stay away. The trouble with the protesters and their stereotyped view of multinationals is that they would prevent the countries most in need of foreign expertise and capital from getting it.

These companies do not treat workers as well in the Third World as they do at home. But on the whole they pay higher wages, and show more concern for pollution, than local companies. Unpalatable as it might seem, these apparent villains are forces for improving standards.

The paper published by the Department for International Development seems finally to accept these arguments. Ms Short sympathises with the campaigners who rail against the harsh realities of the world, but she has rightly decided to disagree with their conclusions. We all have to grow up one day, don't we?

Sterling surge leads to deficit

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THERE WERE fresh signs of woe for Britain's manufacturers yesterday with figures suggesting the trade deficit yawning wider and a survey indicating that output is likely to remain stagnant.

Treasury officials, quizzed by MPs yesterday, conceded that a manufacturing recession due to the strong pound was a "possibility", and that the exchange rate was a "matter of concern".

Meanwhile, the pound edged higher yesterday after Willem Buiter, a member of the Bank of England's Monetary

Policy Committee, said diminishing uncertainty about the single currency would help bring sterling down.

"This creates a definite risk to the inflation rate," he said in an interview with a Brussels newspaper, although he added that the Asian crisis and tough Budget might have eased pressure for higher interest rates.

Sterling ended a penny higher, climbing above DM3.07.

According to official figures, the deficit on trade in goods with the rest of the world amounted to £1.1bn in January, down from £1.3bn in December and not quite as bad as expected. The value of exports and imports both fell.

In the latest three months, both export and import volumes, excluding oil and erratic items, have been broadly flat. The Office for National Statistics said the trends nevertheless suggest the deficit is widening, although the shortfall with EU countries alone has narrowed.

Figures for trade with non-EU countries in February painted a bleaker picture. The deficit jumped from £879m in January to £1.6bn, and the ONS said trade with South East Asia had deteriorated sharply.

Much of the near-doubling during the month was due to one-off imports of silver and aircraft.

Wall's opts for all-year image

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

WALLS, the ice cream company, is embarking on a massive overhaul of its image in an attempt to make its products less associated with summer and more appropriate for year round consumption.

Out goes the squirly writing on a sunny yellow background. In its place comes a new identity showing a pair of red and yellow intertwining hearts. This, the company says, is more representative of the "feelings of happiness associated with sharing Wall's ice cream with family and friends" regardless of the time of year.

Wall's, which is part of the Unilever food group, is changing the image on newsgen's fridges and signs up and down the country as well as on vans and the product range, which includes Magnum and Solero. The new look will also be rolled out across the world.

The re-branding of 100,000



The new logo (top) and the old



ice cream outlets in the UK will take until the year 2000 to complete. Around £15m will be spent on television advertising.

Wall's, which has 31 per cent of the UK ice cream market, has used the same logo since the 1980s although the "signature" has been part of the image since the company was founded 76 years ago.

The new logo has been designed by London design agency Carter Wong & Partners which declined to disclose its fee.

National Irish investigated

IRISH police are examining undisclosed interest charges levied on customers without their knowledge or consent at branches of National Irish Bank (NIB). According to former employees, the unauthorised charges took the form of an interest rate loading, which ranged from £50 to £4,000 per customer. The practice occurred within five branches in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The bank said it would try to trace the customers affected and return the funds.

INTEL's man

INTEL CORP plans to elect Craig Barrett, current president and chief operating officer, as its next chief executive officer, succeeding longtime CEO Andrew Grove, who will continue working full time as chairman. The move, which Intel's board will enact after the company's annual meeting on 20 May, marks the second switch in the giant chip maker's executive ranks in a year.

Unilever east

UNILEVER, the Anglo-Dutch consumer products group, has bought a controlling stake in Russian margarine-maker Moskovsky Margarinovoy Zavod for an undisclosed sum. The group plans spend £12m to develop the business.

Slimmer BTR

BTR has sold Metal Building Components to US-based NCI Building Systems for £333m, all but completing a disposal program designed to slim down the once sprawling conglomerate into a pure engineering company. BTR said it would make a £25m profit on the sale, after taking a charge to account for goodwill of £185m. The sale raises to £3.7bn what BTR has realised from disposals.

Budget boost for Nikkei

Nikkei share index.

Taku Yamasaki, top policy-maker of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, said the party was considering use of public funds for the nation's bad loan problems but the amount had not been

decided. Other details, including whether to cut income tax, would be subject to further talks with coalition partners.

There was a cautious welcome from the US, which has been pressing Japan to take de-

cisive action to prop up the ailing economy, on which South East Asia's economic health also depends.

Mr Yamasaki said the plan's two main pillars would be steps to dispose of bad loans and public works spending.

"We are considering the use of public funds but the scale of such action has not been decided," he said.

The package, later approved by the coalition cabinet, will include the early implementation of 80 per cent or more of public works projects, the highest percentage ever.

— Agencies

Highlights from Standard Life's Annual Report and Accounts

The Group: assets exceed £56bn

► 1997 was an exceptional year. Significant progress was made in each of our markets. Over the past two years, Group assets under management increased by £12bn to more than £56bn and total new premiums increased by 65% to £3.3bn.

► With unrivalled financial strength, low costs and substantial investment expertise, we are determined to maintain an excellent record of consistently good with profit performance for the benefit of present and future policyholders.

United Kingdom: new premiums exceed £2.1bn

► Total new business premiums rose sharply following exceptional growth in 1996. An increase of 45% in regular premium new business was particularly encouraging.

► We have maintained our 'Triple A' ratings from both Standard & Poor's and Moody's, a distinction which we share with only a handful of other life companies in the world.

► Our continuing improvement in the quality of our products and service was recognised by Independent Financial Advisers who voted us 'IFA Company of the Year' for the second consecutive year.

Canada: new business increased by 33%

► Sales of group products were particularly buoyant. Our capacity to service this market has been considerably enhanced by

the major investments made in recent years in improved administration systems.

Republic of Ireland: good annual and single premium growth

► Annual premium new business increased by 20% and single premium business by almost 50%.

Spain: new business increased by 30%

► Prosperity, our Spanish subsidiary, had another successful year - new business premiums increased by 30%. A non-life company which offers general insurance products was established.

Germany: good progress

► We opened our office in Frankfurt 21 months ago. We now receive business from over 150 brokers - including Germany's largest - and are confident that we will increase our share of the market.

People's Republic of China & India

► In China, we continue with the work necessary to obtain an operating licence soon. We received permission to open a second Representative Office.

► The Indian Government is yet to liberalise the insurance market, but we continue to work with our joint venture partner to develop an infrastructure which will enable us to operate in this market when legislation permits.

The Annual Report and Accounts, including the Agenda for the Annual General Meeting to be held on Tuesday 28 April, will be available from Monday 30 March. Policyholders may obtain a copy by writing to the Customer Information Team at PO Box 141, 1 Tanfield, Edinburgh EH3 5RG or by telephoning 0845 60 60 070. Proxy forms may be similarly obtained by members entitled to vote.

Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. These highlights are for the year ended at 15 November 1997. The Standard Life Assurance Company is a mutual company registered in Scotland (no 524) Head Office, Standard Life House, 30 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, Tel: 011 225 2552. The Standard Life marketing group includes Standard Life Pension Funds Limited, Standard Life Trust Management Limited, Standard Life Fund Management Limited.

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Dialog may soon start to deliver

YOU have to hand it to Dan Wagner. In four years, the whizz-kid chief executive of Dialog – the company formerly known as MAID – has turned what was a minnow in the media business to the world market leader in providing electronic information to companies.

Sadly, Dialog's shareholders have yet to see the benefits. Over the course of its turbulent stock market life, Dialog has just about performed in line with the rest of the market. Certainly that is no disaster, but not quite the returns expected from such a supposedly fast-growing business.

The deal that secured Dialog's market position was the £261m reverse takeover of Knight-Ridder Information late last year.

That gave Dialog control of a database containing some 6 billion pages of text – more information than is currently available on the World Wide Web.

The logic of the deal was fairly simple. First, Dialog would shave US\$35m off the cost base. Then, by using its existing sorting technology, it will try to get existing Knight-Ridder customers to make more use of the database.

So far, Mr Wagner is as good as his word. Full-year 1997 profit figures, released yesterday, were meaningful because they included just six weeks of the KRI acquisition. However, the cost savings have all been made and KRI's declining sales – the legacy of neglect by its previous owners – reversed. A peripheral business should be sold soon, raising at least \$20m (£12m).

That said, the jury is still out. Dialog chose to fund a large chunk of the KRI deal with debt, leaving it with \$180m of junk bonds with scary covenants on its balance sheet. The key to paying that off and getting the company back onto an even keel is to squeeze sales growth out of KRI.

Given that the costs of maintaining the database are largely fixed, a large proportion of any additional revenue Dialog can generate will come straight through as profit.

Through forecasts are largely guesswork, analysts have pencilled in profits of about £24m for the coming year, which would put Dialog shares, down 11.5p yesterday to 152.5p, on a

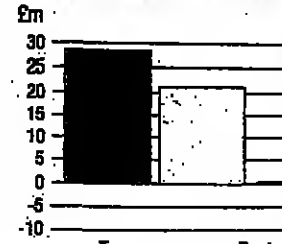
Dialog: At a glance

Market value: £229m, share price 152.5p (-11.5p)

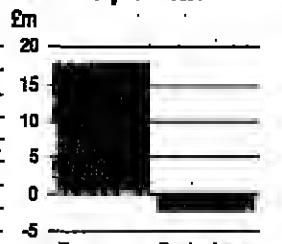
Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£m)	5.7	8.9	13.6	21.4	46.0
Pre-tax profits (£m)	0.6	1.2	-4.0	-7.0	-20.4
Earnings per share (p)	*	1.1	-4.4	-7.8	-20.5
Dividends per share (p)					

* Prior to flotation

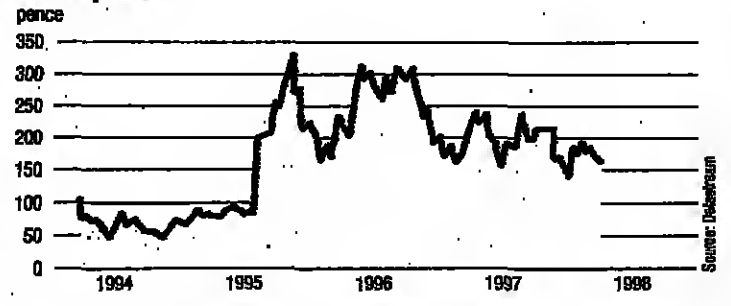
Original Maid business



1997 acquisitions



Share price



forward PE ratio of less than 10.

If Dialog can hit that target, the shares are cheap. But until Mr Wagner delivers, the question marks remain.

One of the few, and worth having

NO ONE seems quite sure how to treat Singer & Friedlander. If you check its share price it is rather unhelpfully grouped under "other financials". Journalists tend to prefer the more nostalgic "one of the last independent British banks", despite the fact that banking accounts for only around a fifth of profits. Others plump for the functional but unwieldy "banking, broking, investment and asset management" group.

Many in the City view Singer & Friedlander as a glorified stockbroker. True; stockbroking accounted for the vast majority of the group's annual profits in 1997. The group made a total profit of £55m in the year to December, before tax and exceptional. Around three-quarters of this derived from stockbroking.

But to focus purely on the group's broking division is a disservice to its other activities, in particular its burgeoning asset management business.

Perhaps the best description of the company is "a financial services opportunity". Singer's key strength in recent years has been its ability to snap up good value companies in the financial sector and integrate them successfully into the group.

The group's investment in the Nordic broker Carnegie is a case in point. Singer bought a controlling

stake in the broker – dubbed the "Cazoo of Scandinavia" – three years ago. Since then, Carnegie has enjoyed phenomenal success – its operating profits were up more than 80 per cent last year to £32.7m.

The shares closed yesterday at 184p, up 3p, and brokers' estimates put the company on a forward PE of around 12.5. This looks good value given the group's potential both as an acquirer – Singer is currently thought to be on the acquisition trail in the UK fund management sector – and an acquirer – the group would make a good catch for the big boys of the investment banking world. Buy.

Beazer looks good value

BEAZER, the UK's third largest housebuilder, has a right to feel peeved that its share price fell 9.5p to 214p yesterday even though it announced a 32 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £31.4m for the six months to December.

No doubt the fact that it failed to smash analysts' forecasts like Barratt did 24 hours had something to do with it but it still produced results in line with expectations.

Highlighting growing planning delays which are causing land prices to escalate hardly helped its case, but the group is not unique in facing these problems and it still managed to grow operating margins by more than 2 percentage points to 12.2 per cent. And its long land bank should give extra insurance against a future rise in costs.

A sharp rise in the house building sector in recent months has also prompted investors to consider tucking away some profits.

However Beazer, like Barratt, has one of the most respected management teams in the sector which makes it a more attractive bet than most.

Beazer's completions rose 12 per cent and selling prices were up 4 per cent, and the group should be able to maintain this sort of growth rate for the next few years.

Charles Church, its recently acquired upmarket housebuilder, has been restructured and is now firing on all cylinders.

Broker Williams de Broe forecasts current year profits of £74m, putting the shares on a prospective p/e ratio of 11. Good value.

Granada set to give ground on Savoy sale

By Andrew Yates

THE SALE of Savoy Group, the upmarket hotelier, could still go ahead despite resistance from some members of the Wontner family, which owns a substantial stake in the group.

Granada, the media and leisure giant, is preparing to cave in to pressure from the Wontners and give them a bigger share of the spoils in order to save the deal.

Gerry Robinson, Granada's chairman, had been willing to dig his heels in over the relative valuations put on the Savoy's B shares, which command more voting rights, and the lower-voting A shares.

Granada owns 68 per cent of the A shares but only 42 per cent of the voting rights. Mr Robinson had wanted to see the B shares valued at about two times the A shares. However, advisers working on behalf of the family trusts wanted the B val-

ued at six to seven times the A. Now Mr Robinson is willing to return to the negotiating table and meet the family half way, according to industry sources, which could lead to the B shares being valued at around four to five times the A.

If the two sides can thrash out a deal it will greatly enhance the chances of a sale, with bidders already lining up to buy the group.

Lady Wontner, whose agreement is crucial to any deal, has previously expressed reservations about a sale. However, she is understood to be willing to go ahead with the deal as long as the family can achieve what it deemed to be a fair share of the proceeds.

Other family members, including Julian Wontner and his brother Giles, have reportedly spoken out against the deal. Nevertheless the final decision lies with the trustees of the family and charitable holdings,

who could still press ahead with a sale despite a split within the Wontner clan.

Blackstone, the New York based investment bank, is still the front-runner to buy the Savoy, which also owns the Berkeley, the Connaught and Claridge's. It has indicated it is willing to pay £520m for the group and has teamed up with Bill Johnson, former chief executive of the Ritz-Carlton hotel chain.

Negotiations are continuing and centre on whether the bid for the group should include or exclude the millions of pounds the group plans to pay out in dividends. The Savoy A shares rose 10p to 167.5p yesterday on renewed hopes of a sale.

Blackstone has yet to table a firm offer or embark on due diligence of the Savoy group. This could be a long drawn out process. Any sale will also have to be agreed at an extraordinary general meeting.

BAe raises £764m in sale of Orange shares

By Michael Harrison

BRITISH Aerospace yesterday raised £764m by selling the bulk of its holding in Orange, the mobile phone operator, in an institutional placing.

The deal will net BAe a profit of about £700m on its original investment and leave it with a 5 per cent shareholding worth a further £235m.

BAe sold 193m shares – 16.11 per cent of Orange – to SBC Warburg at 395.75p a share. The shares were in turn offered at 399p.

The company had been widely expected to sell down its Orange holding and was persuaded to go ahead after assurances from SBC Warburg that the placing would not damage Orange. Its share price ended the day 26p lower at 392p.

BAe originally held a 31.5 per cent stake in Orange alongside Hutchison Whampoa of Hong Kong. Its investment in Orange peaked at £320m but the bulk of this was recouped in 1996 when Orange floated at 205p a share and BAe sold down just under 10 per cent of its shareholding raising £245m.

BAe said it would realise an exceptional profit before tax of £368m on yesterday's sale since the shares were held in its books at the flotation price.

Graham Howe, Orange finance director, said the sale would increase the liquidity of Orange shares substantially.

Takeover talks boost Northern Leisure

By Andrew Yates

SHARES in Northern Leisure, the fast growing nightclub owner, leapt 65p to 582.5p yesterday after the group admitted it was in takeover talks. However the identity of the potential bidder remains unknown.

Rank, the biggest nightclub owner in the country, is not behind the bid approach, industry sources say. First Leisure, run by Michael Grade, the former media mogul, is also thought unlikely to make a bid.

Pub groups such as Bass, Whitbread and Allied-Domecq are believed to have ruled themselves out, raising the prospect that a buyer outside the industry may have begun talks with Northern Leisure.

Northern Leisure's share price has risen rapidly over the past few years as it has successfully expanded its nightclub estate.

The group is now valued at almost £350m, although any bidder will have to offer more than that to be sure of capturing the company.

Nick Oppenheim, chairman, said: "Given the company's prospects it will have to be a generous offer to secure our recommendation."

Northern Leisure is accelerating its acquisition programme, having earmarked at least £30m to open more than 15 sites a year.

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Soaring wage bill hits profits at Tottenham

By Andrew Yates

TOTTENHAM Hotspur's wage bill has soared as the football club struggles to avoid relegation from the Premier League. Star signings, such as David Ginola and Les Ferdinand, have caused the club's expenses to jump by a third to £7.5m in the six months to January.

Spiralling wages meant Tottenham's operating profits remained flat at £7.4m despite a sharp rise in television income from a new contract with BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster.

Wage costs are due to rise even higher in the second half. A spate of recent signings including Jurgen Klinsman, the German international striker from Sampdoria, Moussa Saib, the Algerian midfielder who joined from Valencia for £2.5m, and Nicola Bert, the Italian midfielder signed from Inter Milan, will push annual player and match expenses well over the £15m mark. The club has also been forced to install a new

coaching team to replace departing manager Gerry Francis, including his successor Christian Gross from Grasshopper Zurich, and David Platt as director of football.

John Sedgwick, Spurs' finance director, said yesterday: "We have basically doubled our wages by adding new players. We believe these costs are necessary to fight off relegation."

Tottenham is currently fourth from bottom in the Premiership and faces a dramatic slump in profits if it fails to stave off relegation. The club estimates it will lose at least £3m in television income as a member of Nationwide Division One.

Sales of replica shirts and club merchandise have already suffered from the club's poor league form. Mr Sedgwick also pointed out that the demand for sportswear looks to have peaked, with suppliers left with spare stock on their hands. He believes that the market is bound to fall by up to 10 per cent.

However Tottenham be-

lieves its merchandise sales could double, or even triple, if it can survive the drop and make it to the top three in the Premiership next season.

Alan Sugar, Tottenham's chairman, has been looking at making acquisitions abroad and forming partnerships with foreign clubs. Those plans have taken a back seat until the club's Premiership fate has been decided. Tottenham is also unlikely to follow the lead of Manchester United and set up its own TV channel.

Tottenham's pre-tax profits fell to £4m (£6m) reflecting a sharp rise in transfer fees to £3.4m. Gate receipts edged up to £3.8m (£2.7m) but should get a fillip from the opening of a new North Stand which will increase the capacity of the ground to 36,500. Tottenham's shares rose 2p to 70p yesterday but have almost halved in value since peaking in 1997.

Spurs face a crucial showdown with fellow strugglers Crystal Palace this weekend.



Expensive signings like Jurgen Klinsman mean wage costs are due to rise even higher in the second half

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



SIR GRAEME ODGERS has been appointed a non-executive director of Southern Electric, his first new job since stepping down as chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission last December. Sir Graeme said last year that he was leaving the MMC in order to get back into business before it was too late to rack up a reasonable pension.

Southern Electric, the only independent British-owned electricity company, has also appointed Bruce Farmer as chairman-designate, to succeed Ken Coates on 1 April. Dr Farmer is currently chairman and was recently chief executive of Morgan Crucible.

Sir Graeme has a lengthy and distinguished CV. He was chief executive of Alfred McAlpine from 1990 until joining the MMC in 1993. He was managing director of British Telecom from 1986 to 1990, and before that finance director and then managing director of Barmac. Sir Graeme also had spells with GEC and the DTI. No doubt some more non-exec posts are on the way.

GARY SMITH has snatched Keith Bradshaw from the world of nursing homes to become non-executive chairman of Winchester Entertainment, the film and TV company Mr Smith founded five years ago.

Mr Smith has been seeking to split his role as chairman and chief executive for some time, and reckons recruiting someone with Mr Bradshaw's experience is quite a coup. Mr Bradshaw recently sold his Bakart nursing home company, which he started from scratch in 1979, to BUPA for £270m.

Mr Smith says: "We're growing fairly quickly so Keith's a good person to have, with his experience of managing a growing company. He's got good contacts in the City as well." Winchester is listed on the AIM and scored a hit last year with the film *Shooting Fish*, a comedy which has grossed \$12m world-wide so far. It opens in the US soon. The company, based in Kingly Street in Soho, London, also makes children's TV programmes.

Mr Smith says Mr Bradshaw will mostly work on the film finance side. As part of the work on the film finance side.

deal Mr Bradshaw has bought 9 per cent of Winchester's shares for just under £1m, leaving Mr Smith as the company's biggest shareholder with a 26 per cent stake.

THERE'S ONE thing worse than a Scotsman and an Englishman having a scrap, and that's two Scotsmen having a feud. And over "principles of accountancy", of all things.

Ron Paterson, head of Ernst & Young's technical services department and author of "UK GAAP" (doo! ask), has loosed off yet another broadside at fellow Scot Sir David Tweedie, head of the Accounting Standards Board, over the ASB's long-awaited "Statement of Principles".

Sir David first issued a draft of his principles over three years ago, prompting Mr Paterson to lead a campaign to have them drastically altered. Yesterday Mr Paterson issued a paper titled "Time for Action", which demanded the immediate publication of Sir David's latest proposals. The paper came with an accompanying statement which asked: "Why are we waiting?"

Perhaps they should just decide it with pistols at 12 paces.

CAMBRIDGE University's Business School is breaking out with a new lecturer for prison studies. And oo, this does not mean courses for white collar criminals in bow to wobble away the hours at Ford Opeo Prison.

Alan Webster is joining the appropriately named Judge Institute of Management Studies as a part-time lecturer in public sector management. His job will be to enable senior prison officers to "develop a strategic approach to leadership". Mr Webster arrives amongst the glittering spires with plenty of experience, not least from his time as a senior governor in the Scottish Prison Service. Anyone thinking of skiving off lectures, beware.

GREENWICH NatWest, the global debts market division of NatWest, has made a number of appointments in sales and trading. Avril Pomper joins as a director and head of Swiss credit sales, from Paribas Capital Markets. Natasha Jacobs, also from Paribas, joins as assistant director of Swiss credit sales. Roberto Cristino becomes director responsible for Italian sales from Societe Generale, while Minna Namba joins Greenwich NatWest in Tokyo as a credit trader from CSFB.

Andrew McGuire has been appointed director responsible for eurodollar trading, joining from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell. And finally, Duncan Sankey joins as a director and head of credit research.

CITY LAWYERS aren't all hard-hearted blocks of ice after all. Herbert Smith, the City firm, has raised £1,800 for Macmillan Cancer Relief by hosting a charity quiz night for bankers in the Square Mile. A dozen teams of City banks, each joined by members of Herbert Smith's corporate finance department, competed in seven gruelling rounds of general knowledge questions and a marathon round. First prize went to Lazard Brothers.

Further £3.6m legal bill for Queens Moat

By Andrew Yates

QUEENS Moat Houses, the hotelier embroiled in a lengthy legal battle with its former management team, said the case had cost the group £3.6m last year on top of a £1.1m legal bill in 1996.

Andrew Coppel, QMH's chief executive, said he remained confident of winning the High Court case against John Baintow, former chairman of the group, and three other ex-directors who are claiming wrongful dismissal. He said most of the legal costs were now behind the group.

The legal action harks back to the early 1990s when QMH almost collapsed under a mountain of debt as the hotel market plunged into recession and the value of its properties was

slashed. The rise in litigation costs caused QMH's expenses to rise 50 per cent to £9.4m.

Even so QMH unveiled a rise in underlying pre-tax profits of £1.9m (£4.6m) thanks to a strong recovery in the UK hotel market.

QMH is considering selling its 11 hotels in France and Belgium which have a book value of around £40m in an effort to reduce debts and concentrate its resources on other European markets.

It has also put "for sale" sign over four hotels in Germany and one in Switzerland as the group completes the shake-up of its portfolio.

The group reduced its debt mountain from £933m to £810m during the year, but is once again arranging a debt for equity swap with its bankers.

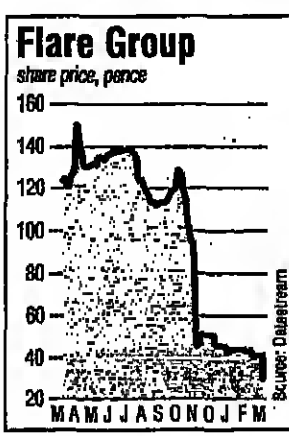
Flare Group shares plunge as it revises forecasts downwards

SHARES in Flare Group lost about a quarter of their value yesterday after the building materials company said it was revising its estimate of pre-tax profit for the year ended 31 December downwards from £750,000-£1.25m to between £100,000 and £200,000.

It said the group's position had continued to be affected by the economic situation in Asia and by the strength of sterling in the last quarter of 1997. The shares fell 10p to close at 30p.

"The warm winter adversely affected the group's heater brick business and reported results from others in the ceramics industry are evidence of difficulties being experienced by many of our principal customers, which similarly affected our business adversely to the last

quarter," Flare Group said. It said it had already taken active measures to reduce costs in all areas of the business. The strategy of concentrating on specific Asian markets has begun to take



effect and the group is seeing an encouraging level of potential business, it said.

It said it expected, later in the year, to launch several new consumable products which have considerable potential both in terms of market size and revenue in 1999 and beyond.

Last November, shares in Flare fell sharply when it issued a profits warning, saying that because of "exceptional" economic conditions in Asia, it had revised down its expectations for pre-tax profits to 1997 to between £750,000 and £1.25m.

The group will report its results late next month. The company's shares have collapsed from a recent peak of 149.5p last April.

-AFX

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 month
UK	100.00		
Australia	250.02	249.00	248.00
Belgium	214.83	214.83	214.83
Canada	63.402	63.394	63.386
Denmark	236.87	236.87	236.87
ECU	16.485	16.485	16.485
Finland	5.942	5.942	5.942
France	163.00	163.00	163.00
Germany	307.22	307.22	307.22
Greece	535.33	535.33	535.33
Hong Kong	77.562	77.562	77.562
India	122.21	122.21	122.21
Italy	206.33	206.33	206.33
Japan	236.87	236.87	236.87
Malaysia	61.027	61.027	61.027
Norway	4.7561	4.7561	4.7561
Netherlands	34.965	34.965	34.965
New Zealand	29.894	29.894	29.894
Norway	4.7561	4.7561	4.7561
Portugal	204.48	204.48	204.48
Saudi Arabia	36.224	36.224	36.224
Singapore	2.0634	2.0634	2.0634
South Africa	3.8262	3.8262	3.8262
Spain	163.00	163.00	163.00
Sweden	13.460	13.460	13.460
Switzerland	2.0538	2.0538	2.0538
US	1.6600		

Other Spot Rates

Country	Starting	Dollar
Argentina	169.00	100.00
Brazil	1.946	1.937
China	8.2799	8.2799
Czech Rep	33.721	33.721
Egypt	5.7700	5.7700
Ghana	367.45	367.45
Hungary	20.3642	20.3642
India	65.5500	65.5500
Indonesia	14.4535	14.4535
Kuwait	3.3540	3.3540
Nigeria	14.235	14.235

Interest Rates

UK	Germany	US	Japan
Reserve	Discount	Prime	Discount
France	2.25%	2.50%	8.50%
Italy	Discount	Discount	Discount
Intervention	Canada	Fed Fund	2.75%
Italy	Prime	5.00%	Prime
Discount	5.50%	10d Repo	Switzerland
France	Discount	3.50%	3.00%
Spain	Discount	Repo/Ave	4.50%
SwDen	3.30%	3.50%	Lombard
			3.3%

Bond Funds										
Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	437	-0.2	483	0.1	203	0.08	549	0.8	894	0.2
Canada	316	0.2	315	0.1	298	0.03	448	0.1	421	0.1
Canada	480	0.0	490	0.2	438	0.1	536	0.0	535	-0.1
ECU	422	0.0	422	0.0	439	0.02	457	0.02	498	-0.01
France	520	0.0	563	0.0	420	0.2	431	0.2	491	0.0
Germany	356	0.0	380	0.2	400	0.0	472	0.0	486	0.0
Italy	527	0.0	467	0.08	455	0.02	447	0.06	535	0.05
Japan	048	0.01	051	0.01	054	0.01	064	0.01	071	0.01
Spain	329	0.0	375	0.0	428	0.0	446	0.01	491	0.01
Sweden	422	-0.2	330	0.0	405	0.02	456	0.01	502	0.01
SwDen	430	0.0	457	0.02	448	0.01	525	0.01	537	0.01
SwDen	520	0.0	489	0.05	479	0.02	525	0.02	599	0.07
UK	700	0.0	738	0.03	676	0.0	626	0.2	591	0.0

Hoddle leans towards experience

Ronaldo warns the world

Glenn Moore looks at the relevance of England's Swiss friendly to the real thing

FOURTEEN World Cup finalists, almost half the summer entry, played warm-up friendlies on Wednesday night. Just three, Brazil, Spain and Denmark, gained a victory: Bulgaria, France and Austria lost to non-qualifiers Macedonia, Russia and Hungary respectively; and only Germany-Brazil attracted more than 25,000 spectators.

In that context England's scrambling draw with Switzerland in Bern does not look as shabby as it appeared at the time. One does wonder, however, what is the point of all these phoney wars.

While the England coach, Glenn Hoddle, means that Brazil, with their pre-finals programme of non-stop friendlies, are "a motorway ahead of us" in preparation, the world champions have only one further match, against Argentina in Rio next month, arranged while he has four. His seven-match build-up since qualifying is also well ahead of Spain's quartet of matches and Italy's three-game itinerary.

But does it matter? Denmark players prepared for the 1992 European Championships, which they won after being summoned as a late replacement for Yugoslavia, by sunbathing or home-decorating. England only discovered their winning 1966 side in the quarter-finals. The problem is assessing the relevance of performances in friendly matches to the real thing.

Certainly Hoddle will have learned little from Wednesday night. Martin Keown, Gareth Southgate and Rio Ferdinand are all good defenders with limitations in possession, Paul Ince is a key player in the mid-field battle, and England look better balanced with a linking striker, like Teddy Sheringham, than two out-and-out forwards. But we knew all that already.

Worryingly it also underlined a message from the defeat to Chile last month. Without Paul Gascoigne England lack creativity. In three hours' football without him they have created less than a handful of chances.

"It was such a difficult pitch I'm not sure that even Paul could have shaped that game," said Hoddle but he added: "At his best he can control the game and in the last four performances he has done that."

Johan Cruyff recently suggested that 30 minutes of Gascoigne were worth 90 from most players and England should pick him even if they only got half an hour from him. "It is an interesting point," said Hoddle, "because no player can dictate for 90 minutes anyway. If you are looking for someone to control different parts of a game for 20 to 30 minutes then Paul could do that whether we say we'll give you 60 minutes and take you off, or bring him on. He has that ability."

Of other players he thought Steve McManaman "had a real



Alan Shearer, the England striker, collides with Switzerland's goalkeeper, Joel Corninboeuf, during Wednesday's 1-1 draw in Bern. Photograph: AP

go though the pitch didn't suit him and was as good as any in the second half"; Michael Owen "found out it was a lot tougher at this level but it was part of his education"; Paul Merson "took his goal well"; and Rio Ferdinand "needs time to be nursed into the position, it was his first full game and he did ok".

The sweeper plan is beginning to look too ambitious given the timespan. Ferdinand can defend

and Jamie Redknapp, who swept in the B/Under-21 team's Tuesday defeat, can open the play with long-passing from the back but neither can do both. Redknapp is being groomed long-term; if he is in the squad for France it will be as a midfielder. The final squad will be based on experience. Mentioning Paul Ince and Alan Shearer, Hoddle added: "I found out the experienced players come back to the fore."

Terry Venables realised the same. In his first match, in March 1994, his team was built around the spine of David Seaman-Tony Adams-Paul Ince-Alan Shearer. That was still the axis for Euro 96 and remains Hoddle's preferred core. But, due largely to injuries, the quartet has played together only eight times in 39 matches under the two managers, and only once under Hoddle.

England are yet to lose with all four in the side and Venables was fortunate in that he could play them for four of the five Euro 96 matches. Hoddle will be hoping for similar fortune next summer.

He names his final 22 on 2 June after friendlies against Portugal and Saudi Arabia at Wembley, and Morocco and Belgium in Casablanca. Hoddle has so far called 54 players into his squads

of which 39 have been capped. "It would," he admitted, "be very difficult for anyone to break in now." Earlier in the week he spoke of 13 candidates, this is how the other hopefuls are placed.

He names his final 22 on 2 June after friendlies against Portugal and Saudi Arabia at Wembley, and Morocco and Belgium in Casablanca. Hoddle has so far called 54 players into his squads

Ronaldo provided Scotland - and the rest of the world - with a potent reminder of his striking prowess on Wednesday, just when the Scots are having problems of their own in attack.

Internazionale's gifted young striker is running into form at the right time with the World Cup finals approaching. That is bad news for Scotland, who face the holders in the opening match on 10 June.

Ronaldo scored a marvellous winner as Brazil gained a 2-1 victory in a bad-tempered friendly against Germany in Stuttgart on Wednesday. The Scotland manager, Craig Brown, will study a video of the match in which two players were sent off. Brown said: "To go to Germany and beat them there is a major achievement. I will look at the game with interest."

Ronaldo's goal, two minutes from time, came when his pace left the defence standing before a quick feint took him around the German goalkeeper Andreas Kópke.

Brazil's coach, Mario Zagallo, said: "Ronaldo is a player who learned a lot at the World Cup in '94. He didn't play but integrated himself into the side. He has developed marvellously as an athlete and gained maturity."

Zagallo's faith in the 21-year-old Ronaldo was emphasised in the second half when he gave him the captain's armband after Dunga was sent off.

Germany's coach, Berti Vogts, was quick to label Brazil as his "absolute top favourites for the World Cup". However, Zagallo said: "I don't think you can talk about favourites at a World Cup, especially when you have countries like Italy and Germany there, both of whom have several world titles."

The other red card apart from Dunga went to the German's veteran central defender Jürgen Kohler, who was sent off for a vicious tackle on Roberto Carlos in the first half.

The English referee, David Elleray, could have shown more than two red cards if he had not been in one of his lenient moods, such was the cynical nature of the game.

Brown studies his options and finds he has few

By Phil Shaw

SEVERAL Scotland players emerged from the setback in the World Cup warm-up match against Denmark with reputations enhanced. Sadly for 26,000 spectators at Ibrox, they came almost exclusively from Craig Brown's list of absentees.

The 1-0 defeat was the Scots' ninth in 14 friendlies under Craig Brown, contrasting starkly with their performances in

competitive games. While the result may have had scant significance for the June adventure against Brazil, Morocco and Norway, the disappointing displays by some of Brown's fringe candidates merely underlined the qualities of those missing through injury.

"We have a good nucleus of 14 to 15," the Scotland manager said yesterday, "but there's much of a muchness after that." Genuinely as he tried to talk up the

input of Scott Gemmill and Billy McKinlay in midfield, their efforts paled next to the passing ability normally provided by John Collins and Paul Lambert.

The case for giving the Celtic playmaker Craig Burley an opportunity to fill Gary McAllister's role in the next game, against Finland in Edinburgh on 22 April, was also unwittingly enhanced.

The service to the strikers was so lacking that it was difficult to

assess the capabilities of Darren Jackson, Scott Booth and Eoin Jess. But Brown was sufficiently concerned about Scotland's lack of scoring potential when Kevin Gallacher is unfit to admit that he will be monitoring the form of 35-year-old Ally McCoist.

One consolation was that the back three looked reasonably secure, notwithstanding Christian Dailly's mistake for the goal. Tuesday's 4-0 victory over Wales in the B match at Cum-

bernauld gave Brown food for thought as he ponders his selection to face the Finns. Tosh McKinlay, who played in all 10 qualifying games for France 98 but lost his place after failing to find favour with Wim Jansen at Celtic, may yet have a part to play after making two goals.

There were also some eye-catching saves by Jonathan Gould, whose form for Celtic has made him unrecognisable from the goalkeeper who struggled to establish himself at Coventry and Bradford.

Brown said he "could not ignore" Gould's claims and acknowledged that there was still time for him to put pressure on Neil Sullivan as back-up to Jim Leighton and Andy Goram.

Meanwhile, Scotland's catalogue of friendly failures was not the only record that came in for criticism yesterday. The official World Cup song by Brown's squad and the group

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Del Amiri was attacked for being "dingy-like" by DJs on Radio Clyde.

The station polled listeners for their preference between "Don't Come Home Soon" and "Scotland Be Good", by the Wee-ist Pipe Band in the World, based on Chuck Berry's "Johnny B Goode". The unofficial anthem, which the Scottish Football Association allegedly refused to play during half-time at Ibrox, took 97 per cent of the votes.

Southport show there is life outside League

Non-League notebook

By Rupert Metcalf

IT MAY not come as much consolation to Doncaster Rovers, but three clubs are doing their best this season to prove that there is life beyond the Football League.

All three were former rivals of Rovers in the Third Division North and then the Fourth Division before losing their League places. Now they are experiencing happier times: Halifax Town are on course to win the GM Vauxhall Conference, Barrow are similarly well-placed in the UniBond League - and Southport are on the brink of playing at Wembley for the first time.

Tomorrow Southport travel to Slough for the first leg of their FA Umbro Trophy semi-final. If the Sandgrounders see off their Conference rivals and lift the Trophy in May, it will be the biggest achievement by the club from the seaside town since they won the Fourth Division in 1973 - just five years before they lost their League place.

A hat-trick by Brian Ross earned Southport a 3-1 quarter-final replay win over Grantham last week and a place in the last four of the Trophy for the first time. Ross, the former Chorley striker, has scored in every round of the competition so far and has found the net seven times in total.

Slough are claiming the dubious honour of the country's busiest cup team this season. They have already played 17 knock-out ties this season. In the quarter-finals the Rebels achieved a feat which was beyond Newcastle United: they managed to win at Stevenage. Dover reached the last four of the Trophy for the first time when their marathon journey midweek resulted in a penalty shoot-out victory over the Cumbrian side. Tomorrow they travel to the bookmakers' favourites, Cheltenham, for the first leg of their semi-final.

Wales expose Fifa rankings

By Guy Hodgson

AT least the new Welsh Assembly has been given a signal how to 'improve the standing of the national football team. Simply secede from the United Kingdom, supply Glamorgan cricketers for the West Indies and join the American nations in Concacaf.

The stark message that came out of an unfulfilling 0-0 draw between Wales and Jamaica is the world rankings are a joke. Friendlies can send out misleading signals but no amount of smoke could disguise the fact that there should not be a 70-place disparity between the two countries.

Wales (107) would have beaten Jamaica (33) 4-0 if all the chances had been taken at Ninian Park on Wednesday. It left Bobby Gould brandishing Exhibit A in a case of injustice. "How can the US be ahead of Holland?" the Welsh manager asked. "Please, tell the world the truth, Fifa [world football's governing body] have got it wrong."

It's not fair to us, we get judged by those rankings. If you

are going to play more games in Africa, if you're going to play in America they're going to get more points. If the opposition they're playing isn't as good as that Wales has to face then we're being punished."

Jamaica, naturally, demurred, reasoning that meeting the giants of Canada in Toronto is on a par to playing Germany in Munich, but Cardiff did little to suggest that the over-hyped Reggae Boyz will be anything but a brief novelty act in France 98. The conditions, cold and wet, were not what they would have ordered but, as anyone who has watched tennis at Roland Garros can confirm, it is not always glorious sunshine in France in June.

Their defence, frequently chaotic, was blatantly unhappy under the high ball while they gave away possession with abandon, prompting the impression that World Cup opponents could lie back and wait for mistakes. "We didn't expect Wales to play on the fifth floor," lamely complained the coach, Rene Saneos, about the number of headers his players had to deal with.

Peter Cargill is a splendid playmaker and Clifton Waugh, who had Jamaica's only accurate shot - in the 70th minute - looked a lively striker but, if it had not been for the ebullient masses dressed in black, green and gold the visitors would have been anonymous. Nice crowd, shame about the team is not a ringing endorsement to take to the World Cup.

The main Welsh gain from the evening was the finding of a left-back, a position that has been a problem since Paul Bodin vacated it. Darren Barnard confirmed the promise he has shown at Barnsley this season.

The night also might be remembered as the beginning of an international career of 18-year-old Craig Bellamy who was introduced as a substitute to become the third youngest Welsh international after Ryan Giggs and John Charles.

Wales still produce players. It is moulding them into a team that is a problem, not helped by a world ranking that induces an inferiority complex. The sooner a continent-by-continent system is introduced the better.

STUDENT

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INDEPENDENT

ON SUNDAY

One day national conference to consider up to date research into the impact of student fees and loans on student choices in higher and further education. A conference for university vice-chancellors and senior management, college principals and chief executives, admissions deans, entrance administrators, student services providers, college marketing officers and head teachers to examine options for action in response to the new funding structure.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- Baroness Blackstone, Minister of State, Department for Education and Employment
- Rosie Boycott, Editor, The Independent and The Independent on Sunday
- Dr John Brennan, Director of FE Development, Association of Colleges
- Dr Geoffrey Copland, Vice-Chancellor, University of Westminster
- Bill Eyres, Corporate Affairs Manager, Co-operative Bank
- Tony Higgins, Chief Executive, UCAS
- Diana Warwick, Chief Executive, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
- Carole Whitty, Headteacher, Carisbrooke High School
- Chris Yapp, Managing Consultant, ICL

CONFERENCE FEES

Full Rate	Total: £293.75
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AROUND THE RESORTS

Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Low cm	Up cm	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Alpe d'Au	Spring ski conditions	100%	02.3	80	110	Sunny spells
AUSTRIA						
Chengdu	Top runs lashed with fresh snow	100%	23.3	70	80	Sunny intervals
BULGARIA						
Belovito	New dry snow	100%	23.3	100	160	Blue skies
CANADA						
Whistler	Mostly firm-packed snow	100%	21.3	200	300	Partly cloudy
FRANCE						
Les Deux Alpes	Fresh groomed snow conditions	80%	24.3	50	70	Sunny periods
ITALY						
Cortina	Sono Alto has perfect powder	100%	22.3	40	40	Sunny periods
NORWAY						
Roan	Good firm-packed snow	90%	14.3	45	80	Bright intervals
ROMANIA						
Roan	Packed dry snow at all levels	80%	19.3	55	65	Variable
SPAIN						
Formigal	Spring ski conditions	90%	02.3	20	50	Bright
SWITZERLAND						
St. Moritz	Firm-packed powder snow	70%	01.3	15	25	Cloudy/bright
UNITED STATES						
Deer	Fresh groomed snow	100%	24.3	65	70	Bright
Steamboat	Spring skiing conditions	90%	02.3	80	75	Partly cloudy/sunny

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline

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Ronald
warns
the work

Trainers attracted by draw

By Greg Wood
at Doncaster

ASKING racehorse trainers to think for themselves was a brave decision, but Doncaster pulled it off with something of a flourish yesterday as a radical new procedure to determine the draw for tomorrow's Lincoln Handicap passed with barely a hitch. If there was a team of paramedics on standby to treat any handlers who found the effort all too much, then their services were not required, and for once there was a definite hint of excitement about the first day of the flat season on turf.

The effect of the draw is a fertile source of debate before many big races, particularly handicaps on a straight course, and often a useful excuse afterwards. There should be less reason for trainers to grumble after the Lincoln, however, since yesterday's draw gave most of them a chance to choose either the stall they wish their runner to occupy, or at any rate a choice between a berth on either the near or far side.



First Protocol: The start of the opening race of the flat season won by Protocol

Photograph: Julian Herbert/Allsport

with four winners in the last 11 Lincolns and three second places too. Right Wing, already among the favourites, was immediately clipped to 6-1 (from 7-1) by the book.

The next three horses were slotted into adjacent stalls in four, five and three, but when it fell to Bruce Raymond, representing Maktoum Al Maktoum, to find a home for Hajr, he chose 20. "To be honest," he said afterwards, "I don't think there is any real advantage for either side, but I asked Michael Hills and he said he would want to be high, we didn't want to be in the middle, and we preferred

not to have an odd-numbered stall, because they go in first and you're waiting around longer."

This last point was also in the mind of Gay Kelleway, who drew, and found himself in the unwanted stall 15.

Silca Blanka, of course, will probably now proceed to win in a canter, but whatever the result tomorrow, yesterday's draw was a very clever and successful innovation, and one which may in time become a familiar part of the build-up to big races.

It certainly provided the boost for which the opening day on the turf has long been searching, although there was also much to like about the winners of both the Doncaster Mile and the Tote49s Handicap, the first of the British Horseracing Board's "showcase" races.

Embassy heads Godolphin team

GODOLPHIN yesterday unveiled the new team it hopes will restore its fortunes to the classic-winning heights. It is putting its faith in the ex-David Loder filly Embassy and bought-in talent such as Cape Verdi, City Honours and Central Park to help wrest back its supremacy.

Speaking in Dubai, Simon Crisford, the team's racing manager, announced that the Cheveley Park Stakes first and fourth, Embassy and Cape Verdi, will be aimed at the 1,000 Guineas, Central Park at the 2,000 Guineas and the Derby candidate City Honours at York's Dante Stakes.

"We under-performed at Group One level," Crisford said. "We hope our Classic hand does better this time. Last year we over-rated them. They were running in races they didn't belong in."

Godolphin will pick its team for Britain at trials which will take place a week before the Newmarket Craven meeting. Just under 60 will be selected with another 60 two-year-olds, the first of which leave today, joining their "youth-team coach" David Loder. The best will switch to Godolphin at the end of the season.

There was a scare for the team at the weekend when its main 1,000 hope, Embassy, needed a check-up at the equine hospital. "Embassy wasn't comfortable after a normal canter but by the time she got to the hospital she was fine. We don't anticipate any further minor scares but we have to be aware of it," Crisford said.

Doncaster	
1.30 Tejueta Sabo	3.10 Tertium (map)
2.05 Mujito	3.40 Achilles (nb)
2.35 Timpole	4.10 Arpeggio

GOING: Good.
STALLS: Straight course - stands side; round course - inside; round mile - outside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: None.
● Left-hand, pear-shaped course with 11 straight.
● Course is east of the town off the A638 (M18 Junctions 3 & 4). Bus link from Doncaster Central station. Admission: Club £5; Grandstand £5; Family Enclosure £3 (under 16s free all enclosures). CAR PARK: Free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: B Hills - 31 winners from 178 runners given a success rate of 17.4%; J Goodwin 26 from 127 (20.5%); Mrs J Rendalen 29 from 169 (17.2%); M Johnston 14 from 154 (9.1%).
● LEADING JOCKEYS: K Dwyer 31 wins from 236 rides gives a success rate of 13.1%; M Hills 26 from 153 (17.2%); J Forster 17 from 158 (10.8%); W Ryan 15 from 109 (13.7%).
● FAVOURITES: 183 wins in 559 races (32.4%).
BLINDED FIRST TIME: None.

HYPERION	
1.30 MARGARET BASS MAIDEN SELLING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,000 added 2YO 5f Penalty Value £2,322	
ANGUS THE BOLD (A) & Dwyer 31	3.10 Tertium (map)
2.05 Mujito	3.40 Achilles (nb)
2.35 Timpole	4.10 Arpeggio

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BLINDED FIRST TIME: None.

HEPWORTH PLUMBING HANDICAP (CLASS C) £5,000 added 6f Penalty Value £8,472	
1.30 MARGARET BASS MAIDEN SELLING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,000 added 2YO 5f Penalty Value £2,322	
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BLINDED FIRST TIME: None.

HYPERION	
1.50 Music Theatre 2.25 Catty Hang 2.55 Golden Eagle 3.30 Teeton Mill 4.00 Premier Bay 4.30 Soft	

GOING: Good to soft.
STALLS: Straight course - stands side; round course - inside; round mile - outside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: None.
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BLINDED FIRST TIME: None.

HYPERION	
1.40 Reads 2.15 Know-No-No 2.45 Master Hyde 3.20 Son of Iris 3.50 Craig Burn 4.20 Forest Tide 4.50 Point Reyes	

GOING: Good to firm in places.
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ANGUS THE BOLD (A) & Dwyer 31	3.10 Tertium (map)
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WORTHINGTON SPRING MILE HANDICAP (CLASS E) £20,000 added 1m (straight)	
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WORTHINGTON SPRING MILE HANDICAP (CLASS E) £20,000 added 1m (straight)	
1.30 MARGARET BASS MAIDEN SELLING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,000 added 2YO 5f Penalty Value £2,322	
ANGUS THE BOLD (A) & Dwyer 31	3.10 Tertium (map)
2.05 Mujito	3.40 Achilles (nb)
2.35 Timpole	4.10 Arpeggio

GOING: Good.
STALLS: Straight course - stands side; round course - inside; round mile - outside.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: None.
● Left-hand, pear-shaped course with 11 straight.
● Course is east of the town off the A638 (M18 Junctions 3 & 4). Bus link from Doncaster Central station. Admission: Club £5; Grandstand £5; Family Enclosure £3 (under 16s free all enclosures). CAR PARK: Free.
● LEADING TRAINERS: B Hills - 31 winners from 178 runners given a success rate of 17.4%; J Goodwin 26 from 127 (20.5%); Mrs J Rendalen 29 from 169 (17.2%); M Johnston 14 from 154 (9.1%).
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BLINDED FIRST TIME: None.

HYPERION	
1.50 Music Theatre 2.25 Catty Hang 2.55 Golden Eagle 3.30 Teeton Mill 4.00 Premier Bay 4.30 Soft	

GOING: Good to soft.
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HYPERION	
1.40 Reads 2.15 Know-No-No 2.45 Master Hyde 3.20 Son of Iris 3.50 Craig Burn 4.20 Forest Tide 4.50 Point Reyes	

GOING: Good to firm in places.
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HYPERION'S TV TIPS

Doncaster 2.05: Plenty of pace in prospect among the low numbers with the front-running Godolphin stall five. Westward Magic, whose chance would be improved by more rain, is nearly in stall seven and is another who races prominently. MUJOVA, out of stall nine and from a stable in form, should therefore get a nice run. She has prospects of reaching the frame at long odds.

Doncaster 2.35: Jamaican Flight has shown improved form on the sand at Wolverhampton and Sue Lamyman's stable has the opening race here yesterday. However, he is badly off at the weights with Westward Magic, who has won eight races on sand but only one on turf despite numerous attempts. TURNPOLE is 8lb higher in the handicap since his Cesarewitch victory in October (2m 2f) but goes well fresh and could outclass this field.

Doncaster 3.10: TERTIUM failed to get his head to front last season but shows solid form in the spring. This six-year-old also ran well here last September, beaten two lengths by Safin in a 21-runner handicap, but is on a 10lb lower mark today. John Goodwin has him well forward at this time last year and his highly rated half-brother is the dark horse. Royal Result has a good chance as long as there is no further rain.

Doncaster 3.40: Brian Hills landed his last year with Mithab and saddles Rain-bow Ways this time. The stable is usually among the winners at this stage of the season but at this distance he could be held by the more stoutly-bred ACHELLES - runner-up in the useful Mautawar over a mile at Goodwood in September.

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Poet fighting to be his own man

Tomorrow an unusual boxer seeks a world heavyweight title.
Ken Jones reports from Atlantic City

WITH the list of accomplishments he is said to possess – gifted pianist, poet, chess hustler and fluency in French – Shannon Briggs could get boxing a bad name.

Truth has never hampered the sport's publicists. But if the projected image of Briggs does not fit with an upbringing in the same New York ghetto that produced Mike Tyson and Riddick Bowe, there is evidence of capabilities that do not conform to the typecaster's idea of what a prizefighter's should be.

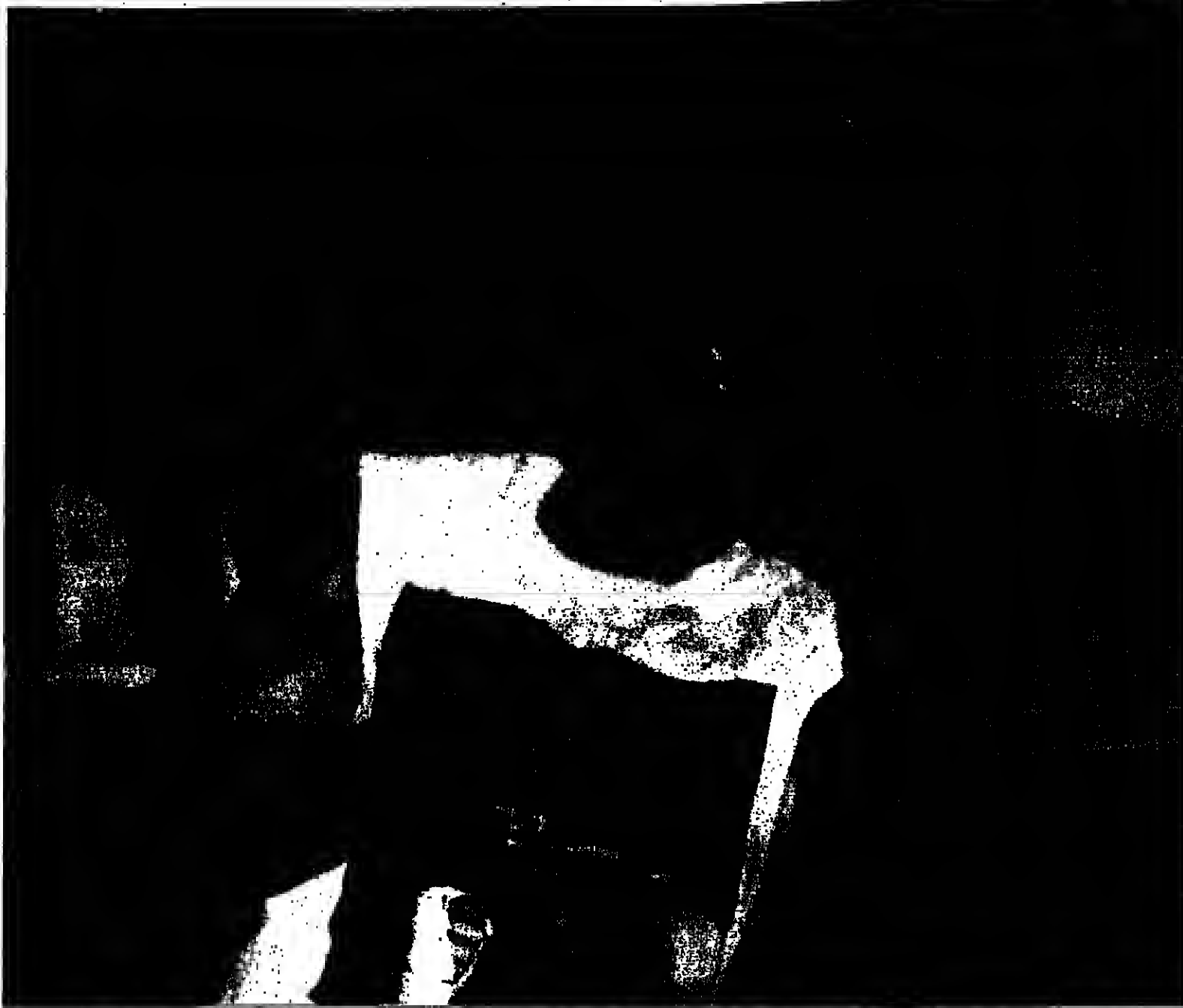
Briggs is articulate, amusing too, with a smile that breaks out frequently beneath the sprouting dreadlocks that give his head the appearance of a large pineapple. "I'm here to enjoy myself," he said this week, meaning an attempt to take the World Boxing Council heavyweight championship from Lennox Lewis tomorrow at the Convention Center in Atlantic City.

On the Jersey shore a little more than two years ago Briggs climbed into the ring against Darroll Wilson holding a record of 25 straight victories and the confidence of his associates and handlers.

If matchmaking can never be an exact science Wilson seemed perfect for the role of an opponent who can keep the pupil interested without presenting him with too much of a problem. Unimpressed by this estimate of his talents Wilson knocked Briggs out in the third round.

What happened in the dressing-room afterwards – Briggs blamed the setback on an asthma attack – helps to explain the challenger's sunny disposition. "I was sitting there feeling sorry for myself," he said, "when I looked up and saw Lennox Lewis. Lennox told me that losing wasn't the end of the world, to get on with things as he did after losing to the [world] title to Oliver McCall. Lennox didn't have to do that and I'll always be grateful to him."

Remarks are invented for Briggs on the basis that they are sure to figure eventually in the flood of his conversation. This does not bother Briggs because the representation is invariably favourable. "He's a nice kid," somebody said this week.



Shannon Briggs used the memory of his mother's death to inspire him to a crucial victory over George Foreman

Photograph: AP

Niceness in fighters does not do much for the box office but Briggs wants nothing to do with the tasteless hyperbole many fighters now go in for. "I'm not here to play silly games," he said at a press conference on Wednesday.

Briggs got this far through a controversial points decision over George Foreman last November that gave rise to rumours of a fixed contest and an investigation by the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement.

It eventually threw out a complaint from Foreman's promoters, clearing the New Jersey boxing commissioner, Larry Hazzard, of conspiring with two of the three official judges to give Briggs the verdict. Briggs did not think he

would get the decision but only because he was fighting a popular figure. "The crowd was behind George," he said, "cheering every punch he landed and not giving me any support. When the decision was announced it was like all my dreams were realised. I've had plenty of bad breaks you know."

It was not only the loss to Wilson that made 1996 a bad year for the young New Yorker. Soon afterwards a close friend was shot dead on the streets where he grew up and then his mother, who was fighting a drug habit, died suddenly of a heart attack.

When Briggs found himself losing concentration against Foreman he thought about his mother. "It was in the eighth

round," he said. "George hurt me badly. I bit hard on my mouthpiece and said, 'this one's for her.'"

Briggs feels that the force of Foreman's punches, especially the head-rattling jab, made a man of him. "It's a thunderous jab," he recalled. "Every time he got through it was like being hit with a bat. Lennox is a big puncher but being able to take George's best shots and stay with him has done a lot for my confidence. I'm having fun but I'm very serious about this fight. I'm right back on track and Lennox shouldn't expect an easy time because I'm going to make it hard for him."

Going in at odds of 15-1 Briggs is not given much chance of causing what would be a ma-

jor upset in the division, one that would put paid to the prospect of a unifying bout between Lewis and Evander Holyfield. "I know that," Briggs said, "but it will be tremendous if I can get into the shake-up. There is an awful lot to fight for."

Lewis's serene countenance suggests that while he is taking the contest seriously enough he does not imagine that Briggs is capable of standing up to his firepower. "That's Lewis's business," Briggs said when the suggestion was put to him.

Soon after the only defeat he has suffered in 30 paid contests Briggs was abandoned by his then manager of record, Mike Marley, and the leading trainer Teddy Atlas.

Atlas's complaint was that

Briggs was too easily distracted by extra-curricular activities. "I guess we were over going to get on with each other," the challenger said. "I have always tried to market myself," he admitted.

"I get into that and so do my fans. People came to see me because of my looks. Now they come to see me fight. But I'm always going to be Shannon Briggs. I'm still rapping and modelling. I'm proud of doing well at school and if there'd been any moose I would have gone to college. There is more to Shannon Briggs than a fighter."

Trouble is that, apart from Muhammad Ali, fighting poets have never been taken seriously.

Crompton's rise from penury to prominence

FEW CHARACTERS in the game illustrate the ups and downs of the full-time rugby player's life better than Martin Crompton.

Crompton plays for Salford in the Challenge Cup semi-final against Sheffield Eagles tomorrow, but the other side of the coin is still fresh in his mind: the time when rugby league offered him no income and, it seemed, no prospects.

The captain of the Oldham Bears was one of the main victims of their collapse at the end of last season. They had no money to pay him and the Rugby League was reluctant to make him, and others in the same situation, a free agent.

"It was putting a tremendous strain on the family," Crompton says. "My wife was expecting our second child and there was no money coming in. I was managing to pay the mortgage, but it was money I'd put aside for a rainy day."

It was not just raining, it was pouring down and Crompton felt that the players were being left without an umbrella.

Dave Hadfield talks to Salford's fulcrum, who has exchanged the scrapheap for tomorrow's Rugby League Challenge Cup semi-final

"We didn't seem to be getting much help from the Rugby League. They should have stepped in and sorted it out," he says. "Once the club was unable to pay us, it should have been a case of helping us to move somewhere where they could."

Some, including the then Oldham chairman, Jim Quinn, have since said that it was paying the players too well that contributed to the club's demise. Crompton, however, views it differently. "You can blame the players, but it's a short career and if someone offers you twice as much as you've made before, you're going to accept it," he says.

Besides, the average contract at Oldham was only around £20,000. Players had given up jobs paying £15,000 or so to go full time and you have to make it worth their while. If you can't do that, you're in a business you shouldn't be."

Crompton became so disillusioned that he considered retiring at 28. Around the same time, he did bring down the curtain on his Great Britain prospects by leaving a training camp – reputedly to go fishing – when he was not selected in the Test side.

It is an episode he dislikes harking back to now. "But I'm old enough to make my own decisions and I'd make the same decision again," he says. "I'm still involved in international rugby as captain of Ireland – something that means a great deal to me."

Crompton was within minutes of signing for Halifax when Salford stepped in, since when the upturn in his fortunes has been spectacular.

It was a signing that raised a few eyebrows. After all, Salford already had two specialist scrum-halves and were in negotiation for another they eventually enlisted,



Crompton: On a high

London Broncos' Josh White.

It looked like a return to the often frustrating days when Crompton had to fight for his place at Wigan – not that he was worried. "I've never been afraid of competition," he says. "That's what keeps you on your toes."

However, Andy Gregory, the Salford coach, has solved the problem by playing Crompton at loose forward and now, three months after being one step from the door office, he is one step from Wembley, where he played for Warrington in their defeat by Wigan in 1990.

"Semi-finals are decided by whether the lads can treat it as a normal match," he says. "Players put themselves under so much pressure by thinking about Wembley. But Andy Gregory is very good at taking the pressure off you. He knows when to be serious and when to have a joke. I wish I'd played for him when I was 17."

Plan for president to lead from top

Athletics

By Mike Rowbottom

BRITISH Athletics plans to introduce an all-powerful president atop a radically streamlined structure in the wake of last October's financial collapse.

Dave Moorcroft, chief executive of UK Athletics 98, is in the middle of the wide ranging consultation exercise over the reordering of the sport.

Among the proposals which have been agreed by a steering group under the chairmanship of Sir Christopher Chataway are the appointment of an unpaid presidential figure who would be responsible for the hiring or firing of a chief executive.

The president, who would be elected directly by club members, would probably serve for a four-year period.

The structure underneath would be devoid of the unwieldy committees which made decision-making so difficult.

Theoretically, all the new body needs to constitute itself is the approval of the sports governing body, the International Amateur Athletic Federation, but Moorcroft wants to ensure that the acrimony of previous years is not repeated and is seeking to win the hearts and minds of the rank and file, who will vote on new proposals this autumn.

On 8 April in Birmingham Moorcroft will embark on the first of a series of roadshows to gauge opinions and build on the suggestions of working parties involving athletes, administrators and the media.

Moorcroft has received clear indications that the English Sports Council is ready to increase funding significantly to support an appropriate structure.

The promotion of major domestic meetings will be contracted out. An announcement is expected over the successful bidder within a fortnight – with Alan Pascoe International thought to be the favourite.

Smith surges back into lead

Sailing

By Stuart Alexander

A PHENOMENAL 12-hour burst of power sailing sent Lawrie Smith's Silk Cut surging back into the lead of the sixth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race yesterday.

He had been trailing Paul Cayard's EF Language by first 20 miles, then 17, then 12 and then, overnight, he rode a band of fresh, north-easterly trade wind to establish a 2.6-mile advantage. And, in the six hours running up to dawn, he averaged an astonishing 17 knots.

It was the British skipper's

more northerly position as the fleet rounded the Caribbean island of Barbuda that gave him the smoother angle after the back markers had closed the gap in a short period of lighter winds.

Mark Rudiger, EF's navigator, said: "The bounds are descending on the fox, and we don't like it. The skipper has been up all night keeping the sail changes going through the squalls."

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (with leg, 4,750 miles, São Sebastião, Brazil to Fort Lauderdale, USA): 1 Silk Cut (GB) L. Smith 107.88 miles to finish; 2 EF Language (Swiss) P. Cayard 2.5 miles behind leader; 3 Swedent (Netherlands) K. Kromm +32.4; 4 Irishman (Ireland) R. K. P. +33.1; 5 Swedent (Netherlands) G. G. +33.1; 6 Swedent (Netherlands) J. K. +33.1; 7 Swedent (Netherlands) J. K. +33.1; 8 Swedent (Netherlands) J. K. +33.1; 9 Swedent (Netherlands) J. K. +33.1; 10 Swedent (Netherlands) J. K. +33.1.

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